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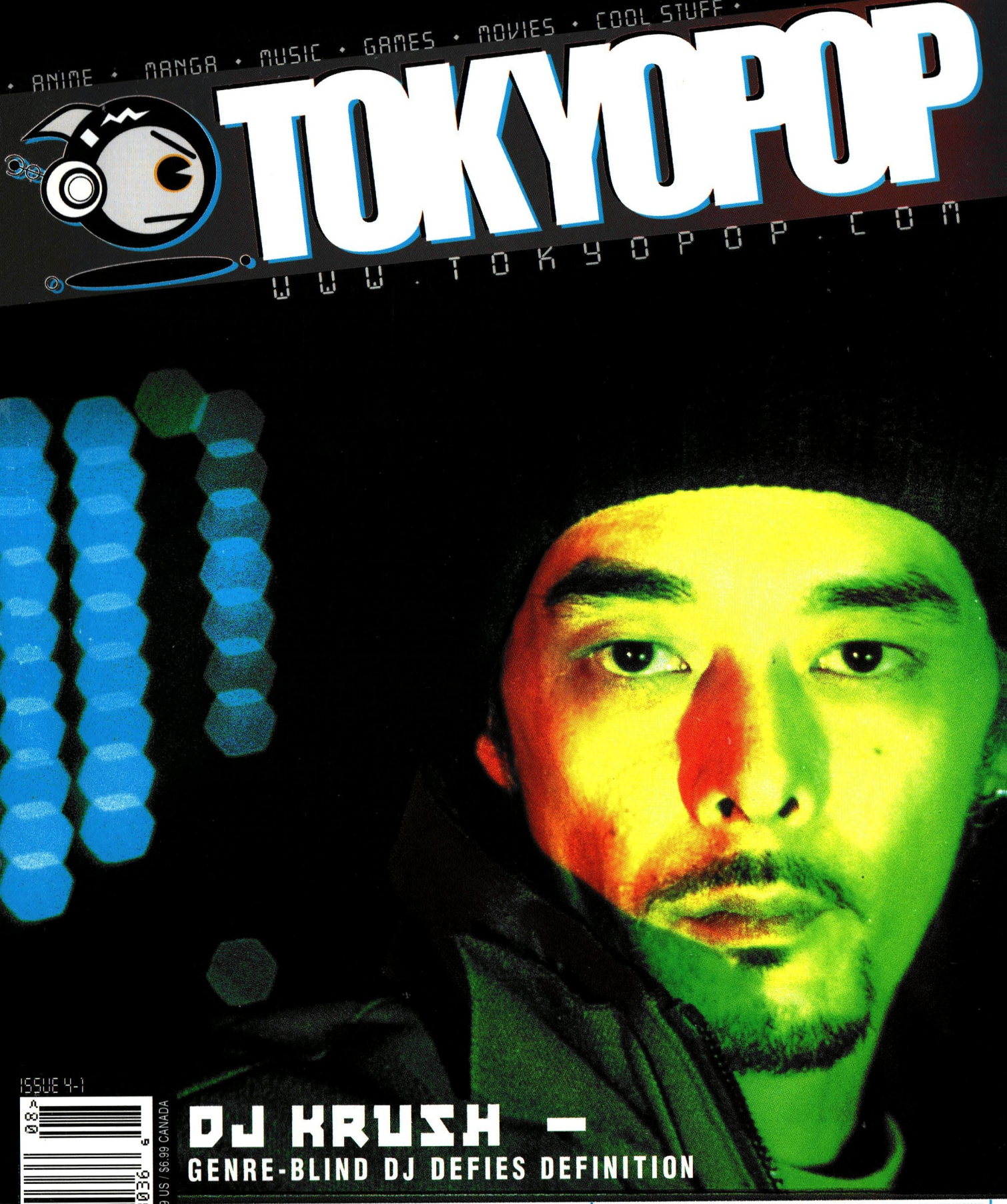

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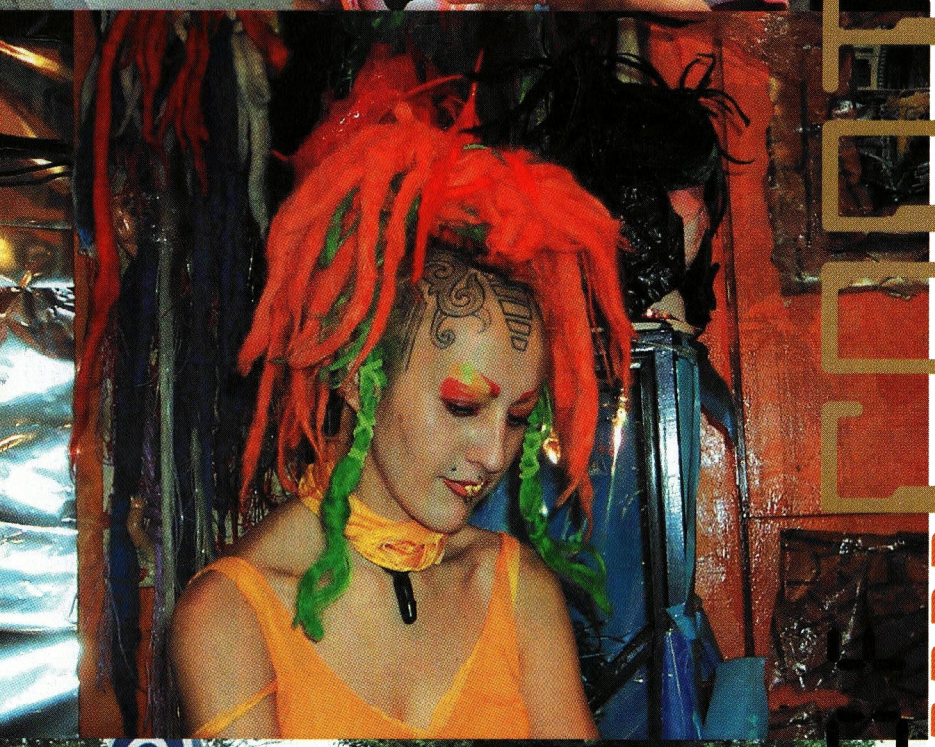

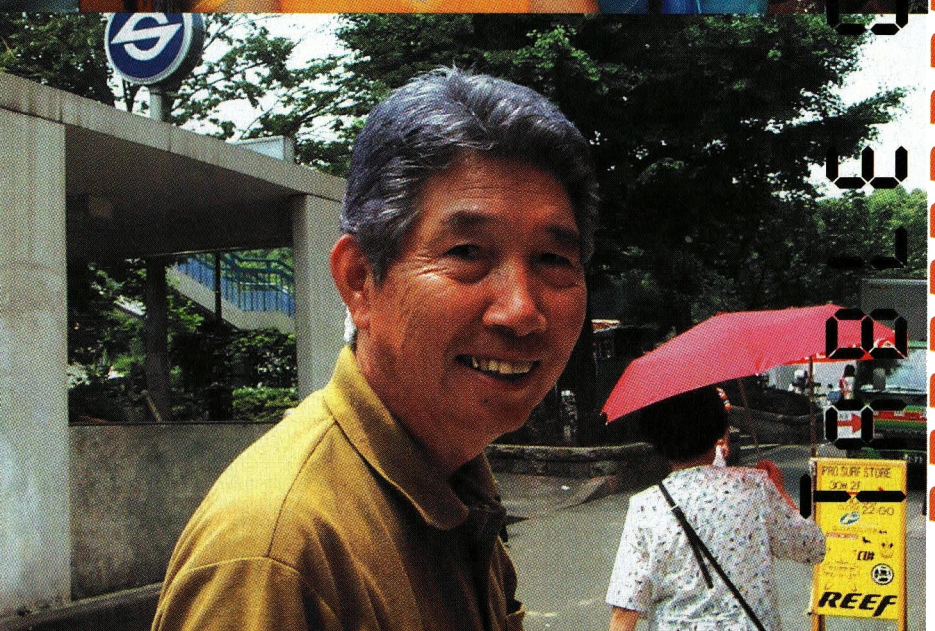

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FROM THE EDITOR....

This issue marks the beginning of TOKYOPOP magazine's fourth year. Many of you have been with us since we started as *Mixxzine* way back in August, 1997. To all of you, many, many thanks for your support. You will remember that *Mixxzine* began as a manga compilation, featuring *Sailor Moon*, *Ice Blade*, *Magic Knight Rayearth*, and *Parasyte*. As time went on, we changed the manga line, added editorial pages and, after launching TOKYOPOP.com in December, 1998, we changed our name to TOKYOPOP magazine.

From the beginning, we've been pioneers. And controversial. When you're breaking new ground and charting new waters, controversy just comes with the territory. *Mixxzine* was the only magazine of its kind when it launched three years ago. *Mixxzine* was "100% Pure Motionless Entertainment" (aka, manga), but it was defiantly and definitively NOT a "comic book." Back in 1997, retailers saw manga and thought "Comics. Kids. Niche market." We sought to change that way of thinking by defining *Mixxzine* as a "magazine" that should be in mainstream bookstores, not just the comic shops - and by spending countless hours, weeks, months, and years getting the powers-that-be in the retailing industry to wake up and realize that anime, manga, and Asian entertainment, in general, are an undercurrent that is changing the face of mainstream American entertainment.

At TOKYOPOP, we have taken on the Herculean task of trying to define and deliver "Asian entertainment" in all its facets. That has made us controversial with certain groups of anime and manga fans who do not want to see a review of, say, *Cowboy Bebop* right next to an interview with DJ Krush. But the Asian entertainment phenomenon goes beyond just anime, manga, and Japan. It is HK cinema, Korean hip-hop, Tokyo street fashion. But most importantly, it is the "convergence" of all of these and the "influence" Asian entertainment has on entertainment in the US and beyond. *The Matrix*. *Shanghai Noon*. *Sprun*. Hookups. *Kabuki* (the comic, that is). Wu Tang Clan. *Pokemon*. *Godzilla 2000*. Go-Go drinks. *Final Fantasy*. While it was different back in August, 1997, today, no one can dispute the influence the creative minds of Asia are having on American entertainment. Here at TOKYOPOP, we like to think that we have had a hand in expanding that awareness.

As we embark on Year 4, we are excited to be at the forefront of the Asian entertainment revolution. In the same way that the British Invasion defined pop music in the 1960's, the creative force of Asia is helping to define the entertainment of our generation. And TOKYOPOP is there.

—Ed
editor@tokyopop.com

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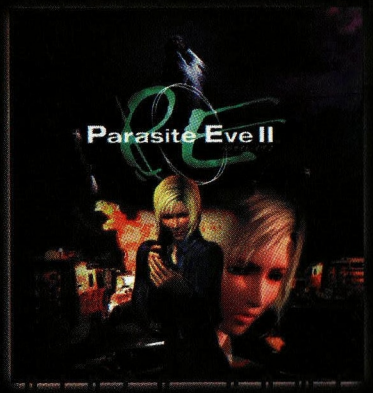

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THE 1ST THREE YEARS...

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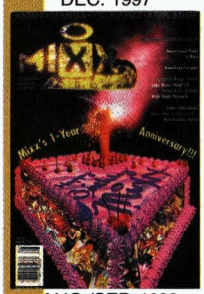

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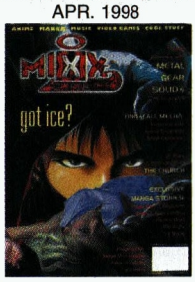

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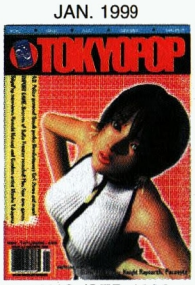

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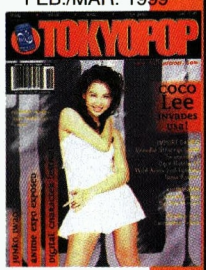

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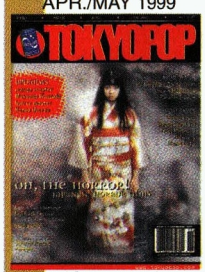

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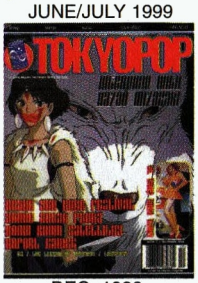

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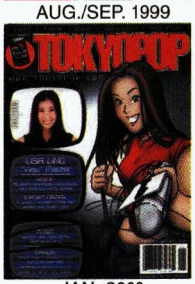

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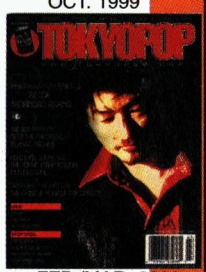

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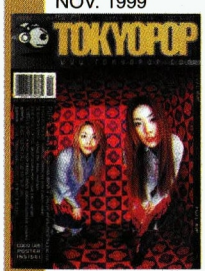

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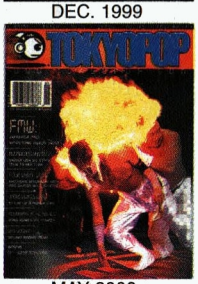

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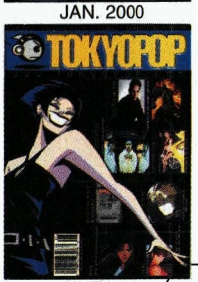

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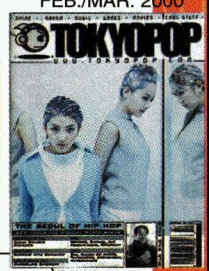

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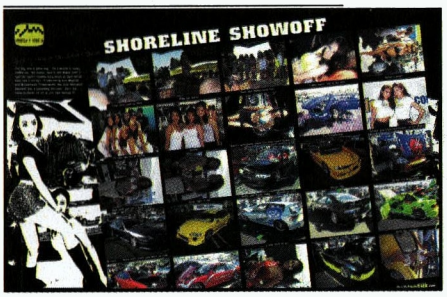
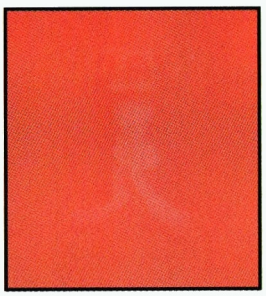




Dear TP,

Look, I have been searching for a magazine that will give me the information I have longed for on my favorite J-rock bands. I think TOYKOPOP has great potential for that!

To begin with: I think you really need to make the magazine longer. It is now around 100 pages, and about 1/4 of that is manga. If you want to add more, and expand into other things Asian, first get a bigger magazine.

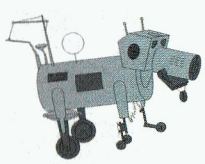
I know some people like pics, I do too, but I love reading. I think it would be great if you could have more information. Text is not something to be feared! Info is a good thing, really.

Hey, this might sound far out, but maybe a section with language in it. One part could talk about Japanese language, and tell what a lot of words mean like "boku," "kimi," "kawaii," "kowaii," "kakkoii." The most commonly heard words in anime.

OK, getting down to what I REALLY want to see. MUSIC! ONGAKU! Please?! Listen, I got the magazine in the hopes of seeing bands I like! Your music section has three million indie bands! I do not even know who they are! Where is Glay? Luna Sea? L'arc-en-Ciel? Malice Mizer? Pierrot? If you want to have Japanese music, can you at least include these people somewhere?

I am "not" trying to nag, really. You are most likely just nodding your head and saying I am crazy . . . But I am not, despite what my friends say. The magazine is cool, just a few minor adjustments.

Nicole



Dear Nicole,

Thanks for the input. Believe me, we would like nothing more than to have unlimited pages to cover all the great stuff that's out there. But, hey, that's why they call us "editors" – we have to choose what goes in and what stays out. Your feedback helps us choose what to cover, both online and in the mag. Remember, too, that TOKYOPOP magazine and TOKYOPOP.com are not just places for us to pontificate on the quirky entertainment we like. Both are also forums for readers like yourself to use as a way to get the word out on what you're into. While we can't guarantee that everything you send in will get put online or in the magazine, the more people send in their own content, the wider the range of coverage – and opinions. Our minds and doors are open. Send it in to editor@tokyopop.com.

Ed

To the Editors:

Katsutoshi Kawamata's review of Shena Ringo's *Shouso Strip* left me less than impressed. However, it may not be his fault, maybe the editors didn't allow enough print space for him to express a more coherent essay. It reads as if some important material was omitted.

Furthermore, he writes, "sudden success makes an artist self-conscious." Great Gatsbys! Shena Ringo was already a self-conscious artist even before she first set foot in a recording studio. It occurs to me that Kawamata doesn't even seem to recognize that *Muzai Moratorium* is a concept album, representing the fictional autobiography of a recording artist who has committed suicide by drug overdose. It's a cliché tale of a girl who dreams of big city stardom, succeeds, grows disillusioned by her success, drops out, and then drops dead. The genius of it is in the way Shena Ringo conveys the story – as a lyrical, non-narrative account – each song a metaphor of the emotion that the "artist" feels at the time of composition.

In the future, I hope you can print a more detailed article on Shena Ringo and her music. If Katsutoshi Kawamata writes it, give him enough space for an article worthy of the subject. She is the FIRST truly significant Rock and Roll composer of Generation Y [or maybe I should call it XX, since she is reputedly Lesbian and Feminist]. Just please don't make it as gushily bootlicking as the "Puffy" article.

Mernole F. Albon
Daly City, CA

P.S. By the way, the other reviewers did A-OK.

Dear Mernole,

I'd lick Puffy's boots anyday!

Actually, Kawamata-kun wanted more space, but he couldn't afford to buy any more vowels. But seriously, ...we have limited space in the mag, but one thing that's not limited is the space to put in your comments online. On each article on TOKYOPOP.com, you can click on the "My 2 Cents" button to let your opinion be known.

Ed

P.S. You said that Ringo's generation should be Generation "XX, since she is reputedly a Lesbian and Feminist." What does she have to do to get that coveted third X? Vote for Hillary?

To Whom It May Concern,

Sorry if I sound too blunt, but I am extremely disgusted at some of the content in TOKYOPOP. First off, I'd like to make it clear that I normally enjoy the magazine itself, and I support your ideal of making Asian culture and entertainment available to different kinds of people. But after reading this month's issue, I, being Asian and female, was rather upset at this "Goldensilk" advertisement and article. The pictures simply consisted of Asian girls prancing around in next to nothing, with disgusting comments posted along with them, like, "Do you pluck or shave?" Or, "Definitely your backside is your good side." How shallow of you. All this does is lead people to stereotype Asian women even more so than they already are. If you must picture scantily clad women, then please, refrain from your immature comments. Not only is it degrading but it's fairly stupid as well. I thought the editors at TOKYOPOP were more than just a bunch of drooling, dare I say sex-starved, ignorant apes.

Furthermore, what is it with this "Asian Drinking Games" article? Are you not aware that the majority of your readers are probably impressionable teenagers and younger? As if the little, "Do not read this is you are under 21" at the top of the article is going to stop curious adolescents from reading. And if you're curious, I myself am 14 years old. Luckily, I have morals. Which leads me to wonder if you do, too. If this issue of TOKYOPOP is any evidence, then apparently, you most certainly do not.

Sincerely,
Someone not inclined to give her name to a shameless magazine publication.

Dear Anonymous,

You sound like an intelligent and concerned 14-year-old. (So do I on my better days!) But, come on, if you're gonna get bent out of shape over some scantily clad women, immature comments, and a mindless article on mindless drinking, then, for your own sanity, move to a different century. You'll be happier there.

Ed

DEPARTMENT of CORRECTIONS

WHOOPSIE

• In the 3-9 issue of TOKYOPOP, the copyright for Boogiepop was incorrect. The actual copyright is: (c) Kohei Kadono/Mediaworks, Project Boogiepop

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- IGN64

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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Animated Violence
Mild Language

NINTENDO 64

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RPG/SIM

ATLUS
www.atlus.com

anime sneak peek

FURIKURI

Title:
FURIKURI

Platform:
OVA/DVD, 6 bi-monthly episodes

Release Date:
On Sale NOW (Japan)

© GAINAX/KGI

TOKYOPOP was allowed a quick and exclusive glimpse into the still hush-hush world of *Furikuri* ("Freaky"), Studio Gainax's latest work since they set the Japanese anime world on fire with *Evangelion*.

The story takes place in the modern, fictional city of Mabase. While walking home from school, 12-year-old Naota is run over by Haruko, a mysterious girl who is connected with the fabled "Vesper Woman." This run-in embroils Naota in a series of weird occurrences that ultimately brings her face to face with Kanchi, a strange robot, and that shady "Vesper Woman."

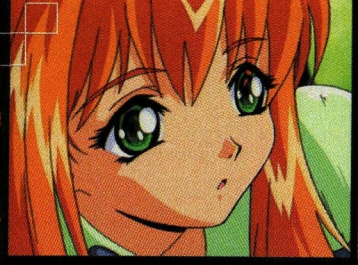
Who is Haruko? What's a "Vesper Woman? And why is Naota walking home alone? The answers to these compelling questions and many more . . . in the next episode of *Furikuri*.

—Sheldon Drzka

BUY ONLINE

anime sneak peek

EXCEL SAGA



Title:
EXCEL SAGA

Platform:
VHS/DVD

Release Date:
NOW (Japan)

© Mudo Shinshi/Shonen Gahosha, Victor Entertainment

Akros is a secret organization that's planning on taking over the world, one city at a time. But instead of focusing on the heroes who'll stop them, the series is about Akros' top flunkies – Excel and Hyatt – two dim-witted damsels who consistently manage to get in trouble. When off the job, this duo of dumbness spends their time hiding out in their cheap apartment and working part-time jobs to keep from starving. It's only after a bunch of bumbling mistakes and a lot more luck that the girls discover the real secret of Akros . . . but you'd hate me if I told you what it is, right?

While "Excel Saga" weaves an intricate web of love, allegiance, convictions, and misunderstandings, you'll also get a full helping of comedy and outrageous fight scenes.

—Sheldon Drzka

SEIKAI NO SENKI

Title:
SEIKAI NO SENKI

Platform:
Anime series, on Wowow

Airing:
TBA (Japan)

© Hiroyuki Morioka, Hayakawa Shobou, Sunrise, Wowow

Last year's anime *Seikai no Monshou* ("Space Crest") was so popular that a continuation of the sci-fi space opera series, based on the novels by Hiroyuki Morioka, has taken flight this year.

This series is set in the distant future, when humankind has populated the entire Milky Way. Through a tumultuous history, the humans separated into many major intergalactic nations. Among the nation-races, only the Abu have mastered the science of genetic manipulation, making themselves the fittest to survive the rigors of space, earning the title "Emperors of Humankind." In retaliation of their power, the four remaining nations unite to overthrow the aristocratic Abu. Reacting to the "United Nations" threat, the Abu summon their pride and assemble a fleet of space battleships.

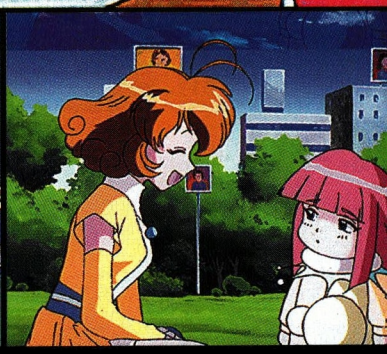
After his three years of flight/battle training are over, Jinto, a 20-year old nobleman, advances to "Flying Knight" status. For the time being, however, he's assigned to clerical duties aboard the battleship "Birth Royal." It turns out that the captain of "Birth Royal," as well as several of the shipmates, are Jinto's old classmates.

The eclectic bunch don't have much time to enjoy their reunion, however, as they receive an urgent order to report to battlespace Aputiku, the "United Nations" stronghold. Initially, they are giddy to have their first taste of combat, but doubt forms along the way as a rumor circulates about the mental state of their commander. But before anyone can bail, the Flying Knights find themselves face to face with an enemy platoon of 150 fighters! Will the battleship's maiden voyage be her last?

—Sheldon Drzka

anime sneak peek

COLLECTOR YUI



Title:
COLLECTOR YUI, series II

Platform:
Weekly Anime Series on NHK

Airing:
Fridays @ 6pm (Japan)

© Studio Tron, NHK, NEP21

Created from the same mold as *CardCaptor Sakura*, *Collector Yui* puts a technological spin on the magical heroine sub-genre, with most of the action taking place in a computerized world, a la *Matrix*.

Here's the story: In Part I, a computer-illiterate 14-year-old, Yui Kasuga, meets IR, a spherical creature living inside her computer. IR is in a tight bind to battle Grossa, the evil lord of the Computer Network realm, who is bent on conquering the human race. To stop Grossa, Yui must enter the electronic universe – decked out in her power-packed suit and CG wand – to "collect" eight special pieces of software, each of which has a distinct personality and form.

When Part II begins, the computer world is at peace, Grossa having been defeated by Collector Yui and her friend (and fellow Collector), Haruna. For at least the first few minutes of the show, all is well, with newly-empowered Yui embarking on a career as a manga writer. But the threat of a world-wide, sentient computer virus soon drags her and Haruna out of temporary Collector retirement. Joining the flashy Collector duo this time is Collector Ai, whose powers reach far beyond that of Yui . . .

Despite being one of many collector-based stories (e.g. *Pokemon*, *Digimon*, *Hey! 'Mon . . .*), *Collector Yui* brings enough original excitement to keep it from being just a *Sakura* wannabe.

—Sheldon Drzka

BUY ONLINE

anime sneak peek

DIGIMON ADVENTURE 02

Title:
DIGIMON ADVENTURE 02

Platform:
Weekly Anime Series ON FUJI-TV

Airing:
Sundays @ 9am (Japan)

© Akiyoshi Hongo, Toei Animation

At first glance, it's easy to brand *Digimon* as another *Pokemon* knock-off, but this anime isn't as concerned with "Catching 'em all" as it is with each character's journey through the "Digital World" – think of it as a coming-of-age tale in Monsterland.

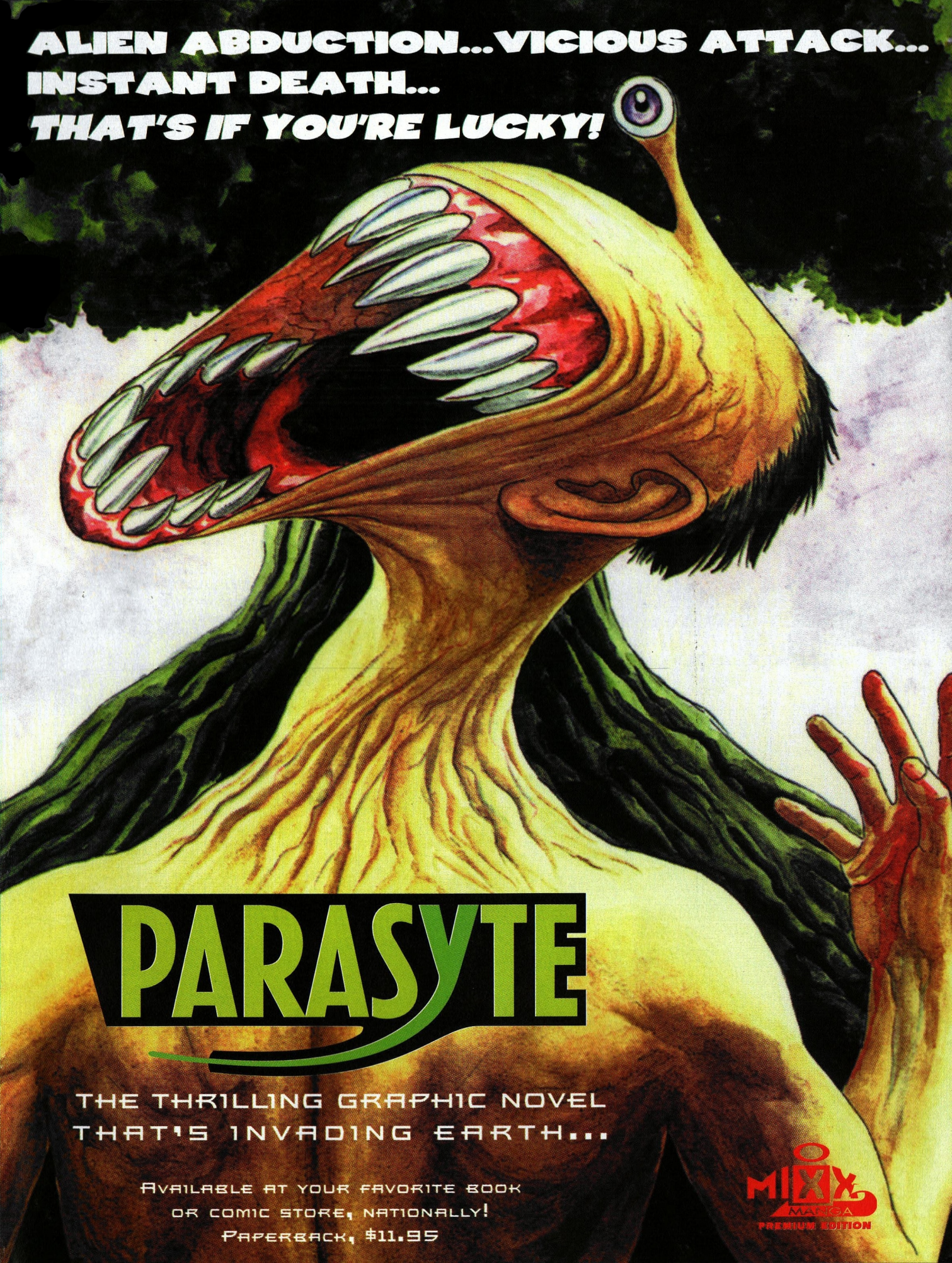
The second series starts three years after Taiichi and friends bring peace to the Digital World. This time a new menace, the Digimon Kaiser (no relation to the villainous HMO), threatens to unite the digital kingdom under his rule. When the old guards of Digimon try to stop the Kaiser, their powers of transformation are mysteriously zapped. Trapped in their cute animal bodies, it looks as if Kaiser will get the best of them . . .

The newest Digimon is the smart-ass rabbit, V-Mon, who'll be partnered with Daisuke as leader of the freedom fighting kid 'n' monster combo. The hot-blooded Daisuke is joined by former members of the team, Hikari and Takeru, as well as new members, Miyako and Iori.

But while these "Chosen Ones" are designed to grow on you as they face off against the Kaiser, the show's main draw is the new Mons themselves, who "evolve" from stuffed animal look-alikes to fierce warriors (like the hooded hawk Shurimon and Sphinx-like Nefertimon). With new monsters shaking up this show and *Pokemon* going gold, there's no telling how long the reign of the monsters will last.

—Sheldon Drzka

BUY ONLINE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scorecard

anime RE-wind

In our speedy Internet world, there's always something new to titillate our antennae. Sometimes, we're so busy checking out the latest stuff that we forget about the old . . . Anime Re-wind – a new section that will replace Anime X Reviews every now and then – puts a finger on the "pause" button and "Re-winds" our attention to those Anime classics that everyone loves. Send an article on your favorite anime to editor@usa.TOKYOPOP.com and it may magically appear in print!

VOLTAGE FIGHTER GOWCAIZER, VOL. 1+2

LICENSED BY US MANGA CORPS

During the brief theatrical run of both *Princess Mononoke* and *Perfect Blue* last year, you might have noticed that just about every review of these films began the same way: "If you think Japanese animation consists solely of girls, guns, video game violence and big boobs, you're bound to be surprised . . ." In case you didn't know just which anime these reviewers were referring to, well, they're talking about US Manga Corps releases, epitomized by titles like this one, *Voltage Fighter Gowcaizer*. Director Masami Ohbari has two stylistic signatures which crop up in every project he works on: he likes to have his characters leap across the night sky so that they can be picturesquely-framed against the moon, and he likes to abuse the no-camera-angle-is-impossible power of animation direction by getting more underwear shots than the last fifty issues of the Victoria's Secret catalog combined.

Since Ohbari also does the character designs for *Gowcaizer*, anyone familiar with his work on *Fatal Fury* knows what to expect: lean, sinewy, insect-like male characters, and inexplicably-fanged, scantily-clad female characters bearing what can only be described as a watermelon crop on their chests (you'd think that having breasts the size of Volkswagens might impair one's ability to be a martial artist, but Ohbari will not hear of any such discrimination).

In addition to the above, *Voltage Fighter Gowcaizer* also features some extremely well-choreographed fight scenes (another Ohbari specialty), a gratuitous shower scene (yet another Ohbari specialty), incest, and a plot which I defy anyone – including screenplay author Kengo Asai – to make sense of. Buy this if you're an action fan, an Ohbari fan, or a sexually frustrated sixteen-year-old with a cantaloupe fetish.

—Chris Fox (USERNAME: ORSON)

AYANE'S HIGH KICK

LICENSED BY US MANGA CORPS

Ayane's High Kick tells the two-part story of Ayane Mitsui, a would-be professional wrestler who gets tricked by her coach into becoming a kick boxer. Although she fights – and wins – two kickboxing matches, she's still vowing to follow her original dream at the show's end. The story may sound slight and derivative in synopsis (*Rocky* meets *Metal Fighters Miku*?), but *Ayane's High Kick* is laced with enough quirky characterizations and humor that it's actually a joy to watch.

Especially good is the opening scene, when Ayane fails to make the cut at a Pro Wrestling audition. Consumed with nervous tension, she loses control of her "special move" and flies upside-down out of the ring, injuring two of the judges. Adding some hidden thematic depth – for those who look for it – is Ayane's obsession with designing the perfect wrestling mask, since it's her coach's "masked" intentions that ultimately land her in the kickboxing ring. *AHK*'s main attraction for me, however, is the presence of English voice-acting genius Debora Rabbai in the lead role on the dubbed version of the tape. Rabbai's vocal characterizations are already "animated" enough to make the medium itself almost redundant, and she proves here once again that there isn't a role or a scene she can't exceed. Good stuff.

—Ethan Hong (USERNAME: OTAKO)

SAILOR MOON R-THE MOVIE

LICENSED BY PIONEER

Although Pioneer released all three of the Sailor Moon movies simultaneously, this one is technically the first of the trilogy, corresponding to the second, or "R" series of the TV show. Since Usagi's relationship with Mamoru/Tuxedo Mask underwent some major upheavals during this particular part of the story, it's no surprise to see Mamo-chan taking center stage in SM's first cinematic outing. The poppy-colored heart of this film is a brief encounter with the alien Fiore (who looks a lot like alien Alan from the first half of "R") that the young Mamoru has soon after his parents in a car crash. Mamoru gives this equally-orphaned alien a rose on the rooftop of the hospital he's at, prompting Fiore to promise to return one day with a flower worthy of Mamoru's love.

Flash-forward to the present, where Fiore finally makes good on his vow. Unfortunately, the flower he has found is a Kisenian

(female, of course – this is Sailor Moon, after all), which preys on people's emotions and has convinced Fiore that the best thing he can do for Mamoru is to destroy the Earth and all the people on it who left his childhood friend abandoned. Of course we all know that ever since Usagi/Sailor Moon became a part of his life, Mamoru has not felt abandoned or alone ("You're my family" he tells Usagi at one point – smooth) so he rejects Fiore's offer, resulting in the types of battles you've come to expect from Sailor Moon (battles which, in this unedited movie, are every bit as violent as the ones in *Dragonball Z*).

The Sailor Moon universe is matriarchal, to say the least, and its underlying mythology exploits all the associations with the moon that both Eastern and Western cultures share. This is a world where both heroes and villains are almost always female, where the bonds between mothers and daughters, as well as between female peers, are a source of strength and courage, and where men, in a refreshing bit of role reversal, are reduced to playing love-objects or henchmen.

Main character Usagi's erratic personality is a stroke of genius from a narrative point of view, providing as it does a kind of perpetual motion machine for generating both comic and dramatic situations as well as for just making things happen in general. (In the course of this movie, we are given an unexpected piece of insight about not only Usagi's importance but also the significance of the various planet appellations that are attached to the Scouts' names – these girls quite literally occupied different social worlds in which they felt isolated and alone until Usagi's "all-over-the-place-ness" brought them together and gave both friendship and direction to their lives.) She is every bit of an archetype as her male alter ego Ataru Moroboshi, and just as influential.

Even though you can probably guess how this movie is going to end (Sailor Moon whips out the Silver Crystal, and all the Scouts donate their energy to her), it's everything leading up to that point that will intrigue you. One example among many: check out the way things that usually have "feminine" connotations attached to them – flowers, in this case – are not only saturated with strength and significance here (the Kisenian scuttles around on spider/crab legs and beats the crap out of the Sailor Scouts, and it's Tuxedo Mask's, piercing of Fiore's heart with a rose that turns the tide of the battle) but are also unselfconsciously exchanged by men as a sign of affection. The only complaint you could have with this film is that Pioneer pan-and-scanned it instead of leaving it letterboxed. Other than that, it's perfect.

—Chris Fox (USERNAME: ORSON)

PERFECT BLUE

LICENSED BY MANGA ENTERTAINMENT

Perfect Blue is a brilliant psychological thriller where reality and fantasy converge, leaving one woman's life and sanity hanging in the balance.

The film premiered at the 1997 Fant-Asia Film Festival, and went on to win the award for "Best Asian Film." From the brilliant team of director Satoshi Kon (*Memories*), special advisor Katsuhiro Otomo (*Akira*), and Madhouse Studios (*Ninja Scroll*), Youshikazu Takeuchi's suspense novel is brought to the screen in a cinematic tour de force that raises the art of filmed animation to a bold new level.

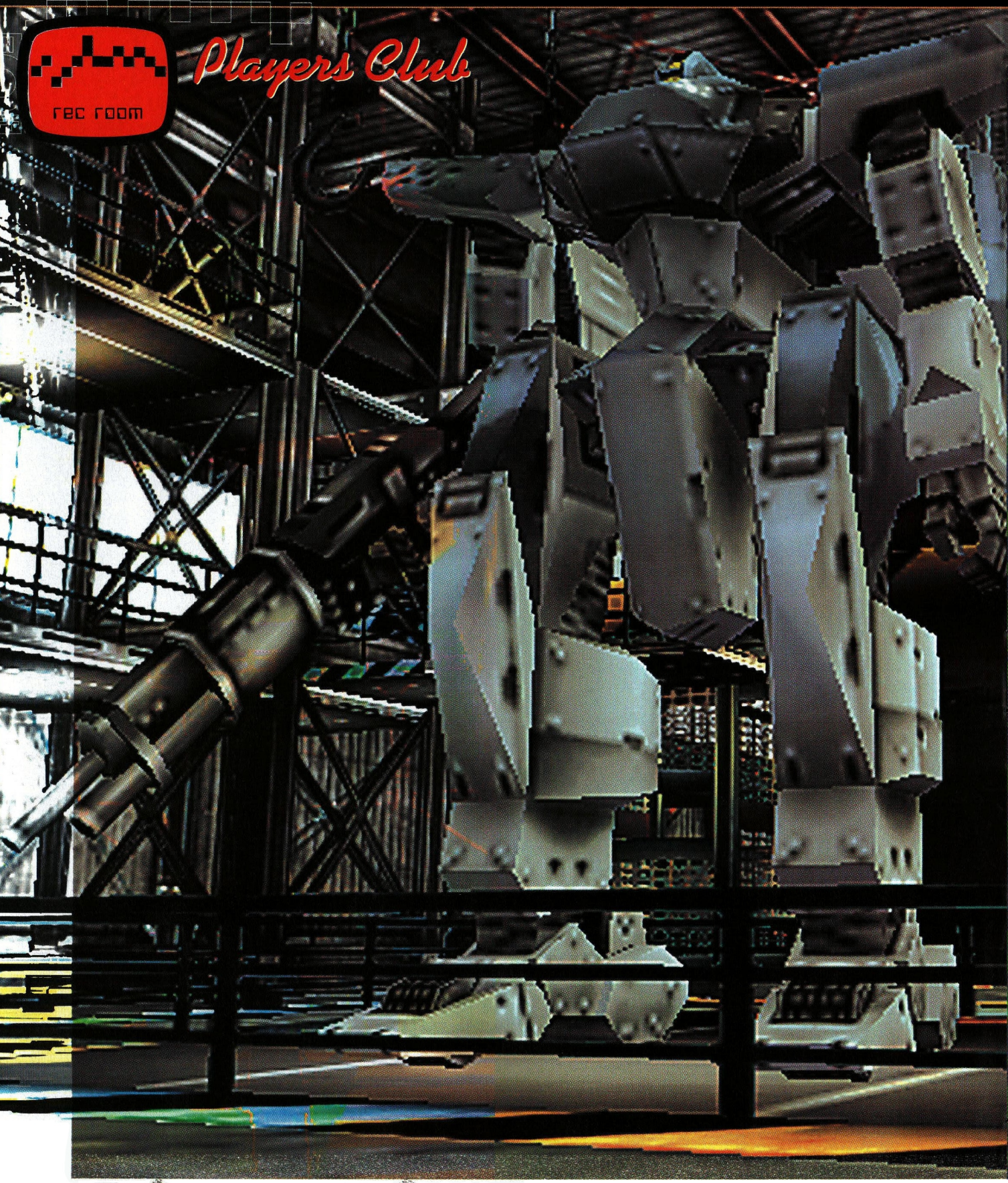
Perfect Blue centers on the glamorous rise and tragic fall of a celebrity. The narrative of the film allows the audience to glimpse into the public and private life of a Japanese idol, exposing the disparate worlds in which a single person lives. As we watch, it seems that Satoshi Kon is challenging the audience to consider the conflicts between appearance and reality, specifically, the public image of a "celebrity" and the person behind that image.

Mima Kirigoe, the main character, is a popular idol singer who gives up her career to pursue an acting career in soap operas. This move initiates a bizarre series of events and brutal murders. Mima, fearing for her life and the lives of her friends around her, must unravel fact from illusion in order to stay alive. But her attempt to differentiate truth from fiction leads her into a dangerous world of paranoid delusions.

Mima's paranoia is brought to life by subtle character acting and in depth story development. Furthermore, the meticulous animation – thoroughly detailed backgrounds, dream sequences and flashbacks – along with techniques like snap shots, quick cuts and slow motion scenes, pulls you into the craziness on the other side of the screen.

The one main theme that encompasses and runs entirely through this film is its realism. Unlike the glassy-eyed anime where humans and creatures coexist in imaginary worlds, *Perfect Blue* depicts life as it truly is, in all of its deep azure complexity.

—Anthony D. Zicari (USERNAME: MIYAMOTOCOOL)



ガングリフォン

GUNGRIFFON BLAZE

Title:
GUNGRIFFON BLAZE
Platform:
PS2
Publisher:
Game Arts and Capcom
Genre:
3D Shooting
Release Date:
Summer 2000 (Japan)

©2000 GAME ARTS. Publishing and distribution by CAPCOM CO., LTD.

Game Arts, (of *Grandia* fame), is launching two big titles on PS2, in association with Capcom: *Silpheed* and *Gungriffon Blaze*.

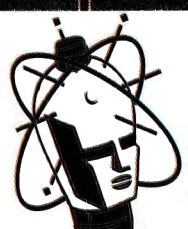
Gungriffon Blaze is the third title to the hardcore military game series, taking place in the virtual realm after World War III. You are a missionary in this war-ravaged world, who flies fighter planes (AWGS) to keep the peace.

There are a dozen different scenarios to choose from – if you complete one mission in the allotted time, then you're worthy of advancement.

To help fend off foes, your AWGS includes a mass sensor that reacts to enemies located in your vicinity. Other cool features can be installed before you fly off into battle. Since the real game is played "from-the-cockpit," you get a first hand perspective on the action. To enhance the audio/visual experience, images, sounds, and vibrations of clouds, sandstorms, heat haze and explosions are expressed in detail.

—Katsutoshi Kawamata

ブレイズ



rec room

Players Club

ETERNAL ARCADIA

ETERNAL'S UNIQUE BATTLE MODE AND SURREAL GRAPHICS WILL FASCINATE MORE ADVANCED RPG PLAYERS.

Title:
ETERNAL ARCADIA
Platform:
DC
Publisher:
Sega
Genre:
RPG
Release Date:
Summer 2000 (Japan)

© SEGA ENTERPRISES LTD 2000

Eternal Arcadia is a spectacular RPG set in the Age of Great Voyages thousands of years in the future. Vyse, your character, is the boy leader of a group of "sky pirates" who lives on a small floating island in the sky. The "sky pirates" are chivalrous robbers who only attack big battleships to rob them of treasure. As any Robin Hood tale would have it, the "good" pirates meet up with two pretty pirates-to-be, Fina and Aika, who join with you on voyages to undiscovered countries.

Your characters fight in "scrambled" battles aboard giant, graphically elaborate ships with the singular aim of plundering the booty. Unlike other battle sequences, there's no time limit for fighting, so you can take as long as you want kicking bad guy butt.

The realm of *Eternal Arcadia* consists of 6 different moons, each with a unique set of powers (for example: red moonstones denote fire, yellow moonstones denote lightning, and purple stones have the power of ice). The mysterious moonstones are the source of your magical spirit and the power behind your weapons.

Life points are gained or lost according to an energy chart. Every time you cast a spell, some "guts" from the "gut" meter are spilled. Guts are a mass of energy that is charged through time. When your guts are all powered up, you can apply them toward "special forces" – unique attack moves for fighting. An intriguing storyline, unique battle mode and surreal graphics will definitely fascinate beginning and advanced RPG players alike.

—Katsutoshi Kawamata

TOKYO EXTREME RACER

Title:
TOKYO EXTREME RACER
Platform:
DREAMCAST
Publisher:
GENKI
Genre:
Racing
Release Date:
TBA

© 2000 Crave Entertainment, Inc.

When *Tokyo Extreme Racer* hit last September, a lot of us went, "One track? No licensed cars? What kind of driving game is this?" Then we played it. Then we kept on playing. TXR was instantly addictive and one of the early standout titles for the Dreamcast console.

What to do for an encore? Well, a company could (and many have) simply recycle what worked before, sit back and collect the cash. However, all indications are that Genki has put some serious effort into improving *TXR2*, which has been slated for release around the holiday period.

The overall premise remains the same: you, as an underground street racer, start out with enough cash to buy your first car, then make your way around Tokyo Highway looking for another driver to challenge. Once you spot a rival, flash your high beams and the two of you are off. As you weave in, out and around traffic, the trailing car begins to lose energy, which is depicted with a life bar similar to what's found in most fighting games. When one car loses all its energy – game over. Defeat all 141 opponents, who have varying degrees of driving skills, and you win the game.

One of the major complaints with *TXR* was the single track. While Tokyo Highway is still the only course, the size of the section found in the game has been increased sixfold, with 180 kilometers of the highway modeled into *TXR2*. In addition, the road is wider in many areas, and features working on and off ramps.

There's also a dramatic difference in the rivals you face. First of all, there are over 300 different foes to keep you busy. As in the original, your competitors are all members of rival gangs. However, in *TXR2* members of the same gang tend to stay in a particular area; guarding their "turf," so to speak. As a result, no more restricting yourself to the part of the track you like. You'll have to master the whole stretch of road in order to take out all the opponents.

If you do manage to win a race, you'll be rewarded with prize money you can use to upgrade your car or buy a new one. In either case, again there are more options from which to choose. *TXR2* features 120 types of parts rather than the 30 found in the original, and 65 types of cars versus 29 in *TXR*. No, there are still no officially licensed cars (at least as of this writing), but the vehicles are clearly modeled after actual cars (for instance, the R34RV looks amazingly like a Nissan Skyline R34).

One final note on *TXR2* is that it should have plenty of shelf life, for two reasons: 1) The game contains a difficulty level so you can cut your teeth on a novice level before moving up in skill level, and 2) With seven modes of game play, ranging from the popular Quest mode to Time Attack, there's enough to keep you busy until, dare I say it, *TXR3*.

—Karl Fields

rec room

Players Club

SILPHEED-THE LOST PLANET

Title:
SILPHEED-THE LOST PLANET
Platform:
PS2
Publisher:
CAPCOM
Genre:
3D shooting
Release Date:
Summer 2000 (Japan)

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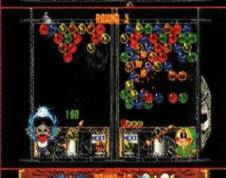
Another big title from the Game Arts-Capcom tag is *Silpheed-The Lost Planet*, a 3D shooting game that's designed exclusively for home game consoles.

It's as simple as point and shoot. Well, not THAT simple. As a member of a research team, your main responsibility is to investigate a strange group of meteorites flying toward your planet, "R-72." During the game, you'll uncover facts to help solve the mystery and plenty of enemies who will try to shoot you down along the way.

According to your scores, you can acquire various weapons. You can install up to two weapons to your machine, and can change them before going on to the next area. The difficulty of the game depends on whether you've got the right guns as you advance the rounds.

—Katsutoshi Kawamata

BUST A MOVE 4



Title:
BUST A MOVE 4
Platform:
DREAMCAST
Publisher:
Acclaim
Genre:
Puzzle
Release Date:
NOW (U.S.)

© 2000 Acclaim

Don't confuse Acclaim's Dreamcast puzzler, *Bust a Move 4*, with the dancing simulation of the same name. (ENIX's *Bust a Groove* series, as it's known in the U.S., is called *Bust a Move* in Japan). *Bust a Move 4* is the most recent edition of Taito's disarmingly cute series that you'll find on retailers' shelves. As with every iteration, the game includes new features galore and more of the same gameplay we've come to know and love. Bub, the friendly dinosaur mascot, may have left the sake at home, but he and his friends can party with the best of 'em.

This shindig boogies down to the tune of bubble blasting action. Behind the controls of a cannon, the goal is to clear each level of the multicolored bubbles that have infested the screen. Prevent the pesky spheres from reaching the bottom of the screen and you'll move on to harder stages. Fail to stop their descent and it's back to square one you go. Special bubbles change their hue when struck or cause all bubbles of one color type to disappear. Pulley systems, consisting of bubble clumps connected by ropes, rise and fall according to the principles of gravity.

"Puzzle" mode consists of three variations: arcade, story, and collection. The "arcade" option is a run against preprogrammed stages of increasing difficulty. "Story" chronicles a race to restore the balance of time in which recognizable characters participate. An odd cast of selectable characters includes Marino the merman, Tam Tam the totem pole, and Bramb the alien. Last, but not least, there's the "collection" of 200 all-time favorite puzzles to play through.

Take note, loyal readers. Here we find proof once again that playability, originality, and a peanut gallery full of cartoon characters outshine technological prowess any day. No joke, *Bust a Move 4* is bubbling over with good karma.

—Scott Steinberg

rec room

Players Club

SUZUKI BAKUHATSU

Title:
SUZUKI BAKUHATSU
Platform:
PS
Publisher:
ENIX
Genre:
Action
Release Date:
July 6, 2000 (Japan)

© SOL/Kouichi Yotsui/Keisuke Naito/Eisaku Ono/ENIX 2000

Unibomber beware! Suzuki is here. With a screwdriver and a pair of nippers, Suzuki-san has a blast disarming mail bombs. Suzuki's mishap starts when she receives an orange by parcel that blows up in her face! Other bombs will follow, taking the form of a cell phone, a kotatsu (an electrical appliance to warm feet commonly used in Japanese homes), a gun, a crossing gate, and the moon! To successfully dismantle a bomb, you must find out who is setting them up and why.

When it comes to dismantling a bomb, you must check every detail, while making fatal decisions like whether to tighten a screw or loosen it, and which lead to cut.

Starring promising idols as game characters and featuring the music of *Fantastic Plastic Machine* (*Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*), this game is . . . "the bomb!"

—Katsutoshi Kawamata

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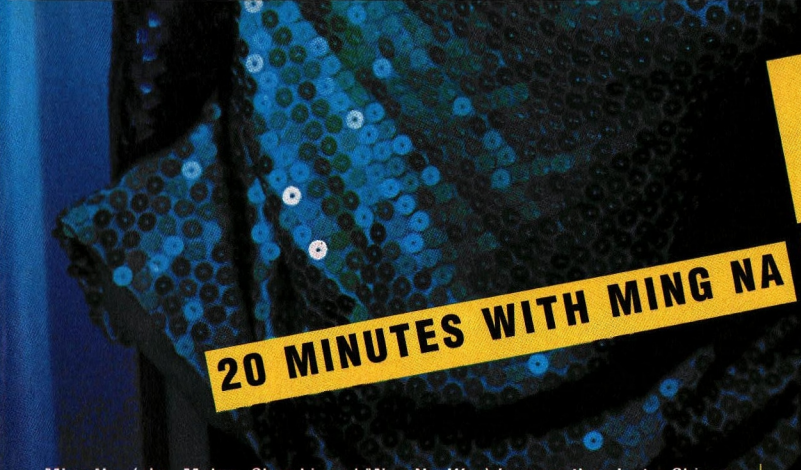
features



20 MINUTES WITH MING NA

ALL AMERICAN GIRL

Ming Na, (aka, Mulan, Chun Li, and Ming-Na *Wen*) is more than just a Chinese legend and videogame come to life. Since her days as the guilt-ridden daughter in *Joy Luck Club*, Ming Na has risen to prominence through her work as an ambitious med student in *E.R.*, and her go-getter persona on *The Single Guy* (a role originally intended for a non-ethnic actress). Always on the go, Ming Na is now teaming up with husband/actor/playwright Eric Zee (sorry, boys, she's married) to produce an all Asian American boy band, *At Last*. Anime fans will be happy to know that she's landed the role of Aki in *Final Fantasy*, the movie. Wondering what life is like in the mind of Mulan, TOKYOPOP asked her some questions.

TOKYOPOP: Hey Ming Na! Thanks for taking the time out to...

Ming Na: Oh. I'm sorry. I just got an interruption at the door. Could you hold on for just one second?

TP: Yeah. No problem.

(Moment Later) MN: I'm sorry. Hold on...Hi, Eddie.

TP: Hi, Ming Na.

MN: So, uh, wassup?

TP: You have time for a few questions?

MN: Yeah, sure.

TP: I had a chance to speak to Eric a couple weeks ago about *At Last* and I wanted to ask you what it's like producing a Boy Band from the ground up.

MN: I really took inspiration from Eric because I've always been interested in music and it was definitely a creative aspect that both of us were always thinking about. We're just sick of not having Asian male representation in any of the media. And we've noticed with African-Americans and Latinos, the movement really gets started through music. It reaches such a mass audience. And we figured that we'll follow suit. You know, copy what's successful.

TP: When I talked with *At Last*, they were very eager to create a unique Asian-American sound –

MN: That's never been done before.

TP: What is an Asian American sound?

MN: It covers such a huge span of music and history. You have everything from the traditional Chinese operatic sound to the percussion that exists in Asian music. The blues scale is so similar to the pentameter scale that's used in Asian music. And we want to really explore that more ... the notion that blues is derived from that Asian scale. There's even Mando Pop that I don't think has been explored in this country but is very popular in Asia. We want to introduce that where there's a similar quality of sound and, yet, at the same time definitely our sound.

TP: We're definitely looking forward to hearing more from them . . . What was your experience playing Mulan, one of the great heroines of Chinese history?

MN: (Laughs) I love it! I mean, I was so excited to get the part. I felt so privileged to be able to play Fa Mulan. The film ended up being much more on a broad scale that I imagined it to be. It's such a beautifully told story and Disney did such as great job. I'm so proud. No one can take that away from me. I am part of the Disney legacy. (laughs)

TP: And Chinese history, too.

MN: Yeah. It's fantastic, you know. I'm a rock-and-roll star to eight-year-olds. (more laughter)

TP: Are there any similarities between Ming Na and Mulan?

MN: The similarities are definitely in being head-strong and independent and, you know, following your heart. I don't think I could've survived in this business if I didn't have those elements in my personality.

TP: What were some of the challenges you had getting started in the business and finally being where you are now?

MN: Gosh. There're so many. The challenges continue. It still baffles me how some people still think in such a small box, you know, and still stereotype. It's definitely harder being a woman in this business, especially being an ethnic woman – you have to constantly push. Sometimes they need to be reminded that it's okay to set me up for parts that are not specifically written for an Asian.

TP: Do you find yourself constantly trying to overturn those kinds of stereotypes?

MN: Constantly. (laughs) But we're not losing who we are, you know? Because I'm not embarrassed. I've told a lot of friends and people in the business that I'm not embarrassed that my mother speaks in a very heavy accent. That's part of our culture. That's part of my upbringing. She provides me with the best material for talk shows.

TP: Yeah?

MN: Yeah. I'm stuck with the accent and the cultural differences, you know? It lends itself to human humor – natural, wonderful humor. I don't want to lose any of that. I think we should really embrace it and not be embarrassed by it anymore. But it's when it's like the stereotype, you know? The bad: you see a Caucasian person wearing black-face make up and eating watermelon. You know those negative stereotypes? Where we're war victims all the time or wear buck teeth or, you know, we have our eyes pulled all the way back of our head. Then, it becomes a negative stereotype, and those are the ones that we are trying to break down.

TP: Is your experience with discrimination what gives you motivation as an actress?

MN: Well, in the beginning I think it was. Now, it's more about just being seen as an actress rather that constantly trying to harp on those issues, because they're gonna be there all the time. So I don't constantly pick at it, cause it's like picking on an old scab and it won't heal. It's better to just let it go and concentrate on the obvious: we're all human beings. We all have different personalities. We can be a whole person and not. I mean, I've had so many roles now where I'm not ever pegged as being in it because I'm Asian. I'm in the part because my personality or my editing or whatever I lend to the character creates a whole picture. I think I've achieved that with *One Night Stand*, I've achieved it on *E.R.*, I've achieved on *Single Guy*. Yeah. I'm an Asian face, but nobody comes up to me with those characters and goes, "Oh. I liked your Chinese." That's when I feel like I've accomplished something.

TP: You mentioned your mother earlier. Are you close to your family?

MN: Extremely. Definitely got the extended family system. She visits sometimes three, four months at a time. And Noah Wiley's like, "I can't even live with my

mom for two weeks. Let alone a mother-in-law." He really admires Eric. That's the beauty of the Chinese family, too. It doesn't feel weird to have a mom in the house.

TP: Was it tough for your parents to accept your choice to become an actress?
MN: Extremely. Especially because my mom grew up in Hong Kong. I guess there were all these horrible ideas of the casting couch and how you have to sleep your way up to the top and you're owned by the mafia. I'm like, "That doesn't happen here. We have unions." She didn't want me to be broken-hearted. She knew that it would be a tough occupation to have. Now, she just takes all the credit.

TP: Did she finally come around when she saw you in *Joy Luck Club*?

MN: Oh yeah. Well, I actually think when I got accepted into Carnegie Melon and graduated with a degree. That was their first true acceptance. They definitely paid the bill, you know, the tuition. But *The Joy Luck Club* was truly a remarkable experience for them and for me. They were so moved by that movie and they never anticipated that they could see their daughter up on the large screen portraying something so personal about Chinese families and Chinese people.

TP: Because it was so personal, was the audition process for *Joy Luck Club* difficult for you emotionally?

MN: Getting the part was difficult because I wasn't known. I came really pretty much fresh out of college and had done a couple of years on a soap opera (*As The World Turns*) . That was my background. I've never done film before. So, Wayne Wang and Amy Tan, as much as they liked me, they thought they had to get a "name" and they mentioned a couple of actresses. I was so naïve back then. I mean I feel like Jun was truly a person I was close to and I could portray and I understood her so well that I started saying, "Well, you can't pick her 'cause she's not American enough! You can't pick her!" I was like telling them who to cast. I had nothing to lose at the time, you know. I had a forty-five minute interview with them telling them about my own personal experience and why I felt like I could play June. It was really like bearing your soul to some strangers. That was the difficult part in getting it. The rest was beautiful. I got to travel to China and I brought my mom with me and, you know, it was like *Joy Luck Club* again.

TP: What do you think it was about that 45 minutes that convinced them that you were the right person?

MN: I think they really felt my pain and sincerity...

(Dogs barking...woof woof)

TP: What kind of dog do you have?

MN: A Big Mutt and a little mutt.

TP: Hey, I've got a mutt, too.

MN: (barking) That's the yapper one which we adopted a year ago. The big one is a lab mix. He's a great dog.

TP: You were saying about the forty-five minutes...

MN: It's very hard growing up. I grew up where I was surrounded by all Chinese people in Hong Kong. And then I was shoveled to America and I grew up in White suburbia. And trying to always fit in and trying to always belong was a constant struggle for me. That was part of Jun. That's really a part of many Asian Americans' experience. Whether you grow up in white suburbia or not, you're never depicted in the media.

TP: So, when did you feel you had a sense of being an Asian American?

MN: I've always had a sense of who I was, but the first real experience I had was when I was on a plane ride and this guy came up to me and asked me if I was Chinese, and I said, "Yes. I am." Then my girlfriend said, "Yeah, but she's American" and she was from England. That made me first wonder why we are always pegged like "We're Chinese. We're from China." Then, when I started traveling to Europe, as soon as they heard my accent, they said, "Oh! You're American." That's when I realized that the rest of the world would see me as American because of how I sound. But in America it takes time to convince people. I think it's happening...definitely...

TP: Did that influence the way you looked at relationships . . . Was it weird to see yourself with a Chinese guy?

MN: Oh yeah! I grew up in Mt. Levenin. I never dated any Chinese guys. It's still surprising that I ended up marrying one. (laughss) To me, it was like dating my brother. You know? I mean Russell Wong...I remember he was starring on our soap opera one time. And all the girls in the office were going ga-ga over him. "Oh my God! He's so cute!" And I just kinda looked at them like, "What? What do you see?" I mean Russell became my buddy, but I never ever saw him as...you know? Now, I see him and I'm like, "Yeah, he is good looking." (laughs)

TP: That's funny. So was Eric the one to break that perception?

MN: No. Actually, coming out to L.A. really made a big difference, because I think L.A. has several more generations of Asian Americans. Even the parents are really hip – they were educated out here in colleges and much more. I guess I definitely noticed that "There a lot of Asian-Americans like me." I actually did date a couple of Asian guys before Eric.

TP: We won't let him know about that though.

MN: (laughs) No. No. He had his fair share of blonds and...

TP: So, any other projects you're working on now besides *At Last*?

MN: Um. I'm working on an independent film with Harry Sheer. He does the voices for the *Simpsons*. He's in my ultimate classic film, *Spinal Tap*. I love him. He's such a funny man. It's called *Call of the Glen* and I play AyDee Wu. She's a feisty reporter whose married to this guy who's being initiated or joins this All White Male corporate kind of retreat which is very exclusive and apparently very real. It started at Berkeley and Harry just wanted to make a satirical film about it. The White Man gets poked fun at!

TP: When does that come out?

MN: I don't know, it's an independent film. You know in the next year. And of course I'm doing the lead voice for *Final Fantasy*. Aki, yeah, that's been really fun.

—Eddie Hsu

NOT N'SYNC

AN ASIAN BOY BAND, *AT LAST*

"I don't want people to hear us and say, "Wow, they're good For an Asian group. I want them to say, "Wow, they're really good. Period."

What is it about Boy Groups that we love to hate – the prettied faces, manufactured melodies, or that oozing post-pubescent machismo?

Listening to Cliff, JP, Ken, and Justin of *At Last* – the new "Asian Boy Band" produced by actress Ming Na and Eric Zee – my conceptions of boy groups as sissy male divas fell through the roof.

I pull up to the Santa Monica condo, the site of *At Last*'s home and recording studio, expecting to come face to face with an Asian N'Sync. (It won't be long, I think, before these guys go "Bye Bye Bye"). Wiping the grimace off my face, I knock on apartment # 2. JP, a medium built tenor opens the door to the sparsely furnished apartment.

Still in the midst of moving into their new place, the guys have that fresh look of having just arrived. And they have. Earlier this year, Ming Na and Eric sent out emails to all the college campuses in Southern California for an open audition. From a pool of hundreds of aspiring artists, JP, Cliff, Justin and Ken emerged as music's next hot commodity.

Unlike the other teen sensations that have blossomed on the scene, these guys aren't former mousekateers, nor are they trekking their way through boy group boot camp. With a limited budget and a still tenuous audience base, Eric Zee is taking the grass roots approach to success, booking performances at popular clubs in Southern California, with plans to release their debut album this year.

What will distinguish *At Last* from their poppy peers is a distinct Asian American sound. Which is? According to the group, it's a combination of soul, R&B, and hip-hop with an Asian twist – meaning that Asian instruments like Taiko drums and the Chinese erhu are blended into the music to add that unmistakable Asian flavor.

Although *At Last* is clearly "Asian American," the group hopes to cultivate a multicultural fan base, and the kind of respect that's given to mainstream artists.

Says Justin, "Our goal is to break out into the American mainstream . . . There is absolutely nobody with the exception of Coco Lee, but once again Asian males are getting shafted. We have zero representation. There're lots of guys trying and we just feel that we want to be one of those trying, and hopefully, break out."

The group is currently recording their first album, which is slated for release in the Fall. For now, satisfy your curiosity with a special improv performance by *At Last* at www.TOKYOPOP.com.

THE YOUNG AND TRENDY IN THAILAND'S SIAM SQUARE

Four p.m. on a Thursday afternoon. Best friends Jan and Cherry have embarked on their weekly ritual, heading from their Bangkok high school to Siam Square, the city's biggest and trendiest outdoor shopping mall complex. Making their way past the mall's trendy boutiques proffering platform shoes, teeny T-shirts, furry backpacks, stickers, hair bands and Hello Kitty accessories, the two girls reach their destination: Center Point, the outdoor plaza that becomes the epicenter of a teen fashion parade every afternoon.

Jan and Cherry (sounds like a 1950's surf band) duck into a neighboring cafe and quickly change out of their standard issue school uniforms of bland blue skirt and plain white top, squeezing themselves into the tank tops, bright miniskirts and platform shoes that they've stashed in their school satchels. Transformation from students to starlets complete, they step out confidently into the teen fashion universe of Center Point.

It's not long before they spot a group they know from among the dozens of Thai teens that hang out here. Don't know anyone? No problem. People come here to see and be seen, and there's no shortage of hormones in the air. Perched around the water fountain, the young and hip of Bangkok chat and strut amongst themselves, sipping on frosty colored drinks and occasionally dancing to the Thai pop music blaring from speakers overhead.

Located next to Thailand's most famous university, Siam Square is the leisure hub for teens in Bangkok with time to kill and bahts to spend. Cram schools abound here as well, making it a natural stop for those students that can't find a straight path from school to home. The word on style here is "stand out": the more outrageous the look, the more looks you get.

With manga, anime, and *Pokemon* flourishing, Japan heavily influences the Thai scene.

BOYS OF DRAG

While it's the cool thing for young Thais to hang out in Siam Square and Center Point, it still comes as a shock to see boys in drag. And not just one or two, but what seems to be little packs of them, clad in varying degrees of feminine fashion.

The majority seems to be on the fringe, experimenting with just a tight tank or halter strap top with otherwise normal guy-wear of jeans or baggy pants and big sneakers. But you also find a few who have gone to the extreme end of the spectrum and have left their guy-hood behind.

I saw a couple of what at first I took to be incredibly ugly girls, who on closer inspection turned out to be very skinny boys in full gal regalia. One was tall and slim, wearing a yellow tube top, tight denim skirt, platform shoes, and carrying a dainty little handbag. He also wore eye shadow, lipstick and blush, and his school-regulation short hair was fastened with colorful hair barrettes. He must have been about sixteen years old.

Another boy had gone the cutesy route. Short and cutely rounded with the remains of adolescent puppy fat, he looked about thirteen, and had on a cartoon covered tight T shirt, magenta pink mini skirt, socks and platform shoes, make up, a hair band and bracelets, and of course the regulation bright back pack. He refused to have his photo taken, or even speak, cowering behind two friends and staring at me suspiciously, like a cornered bunny.

"He's very, very shy," explained his friends, who had no such qualms themselves, eagerly crowding around the camera when they heard they might be in a magazine. "He told me to ask you if you thought he was a girl or a boy when you first saw him" they asked me, then appeared somewhat disappointed to hear my answer:

"That's a boy!"
"Oh, poor thing," they tittered. "He'll have to try harder."

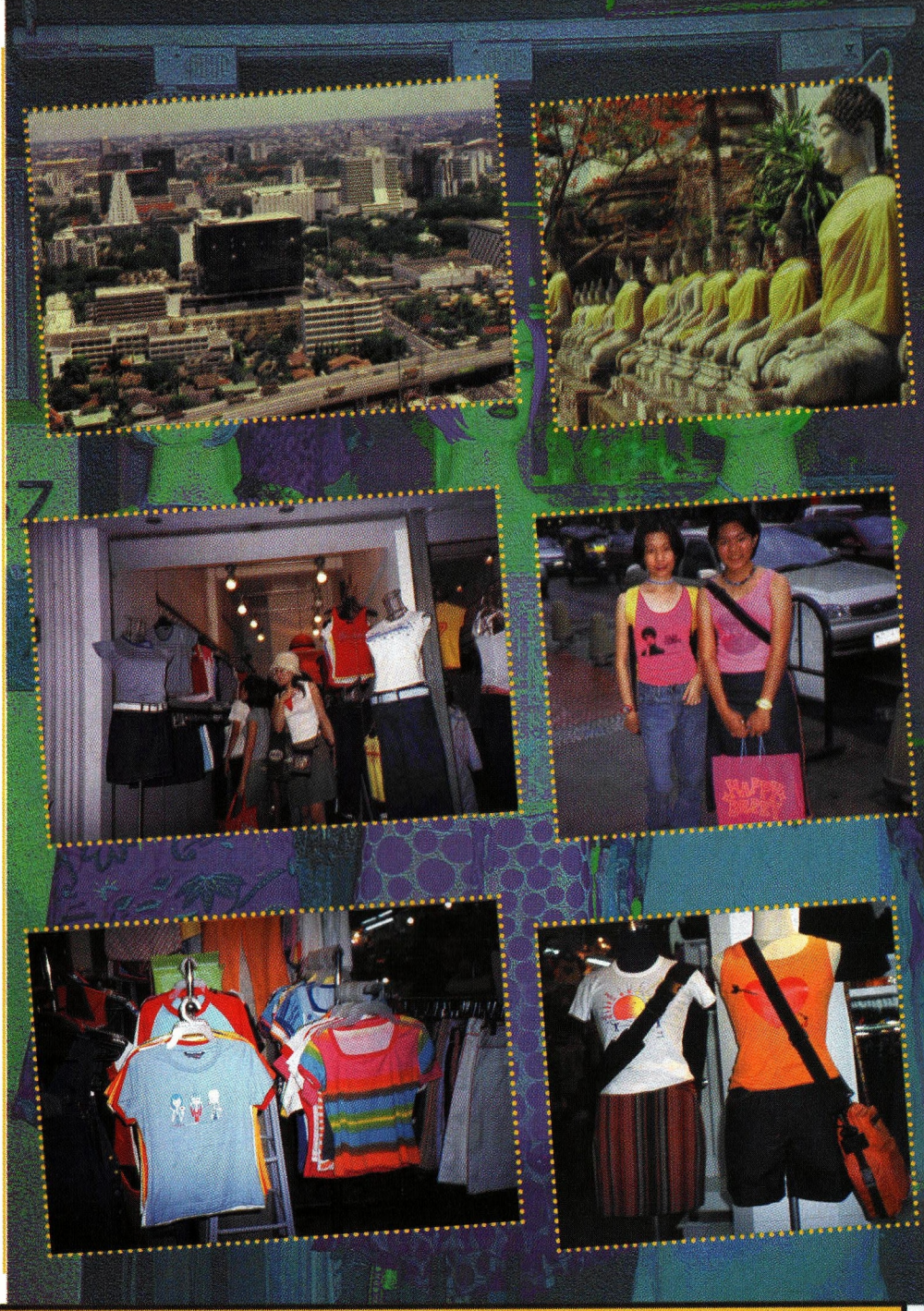
Unlike in the U.S., or other more conservative Asian countries, Thai society not only falls easy victim to fashion trends, but also is generally tolerant of various aspects of social behavior and sexual expression. In Thailand it's not a stigma to be gay. Almost all of Thailand's most famous fashion and interior designers are openly gay and respected in their fields. While it's not uncommon to find Thai men wearing their gay badge with pride, it's still freakish to find teenage boys bursting out in drag at such a tender age. Clearly, Thai youth feel completely free to express themselves at Center Point, using fashion as the medium to communicate their sense of self.

Thai teen fashion gets its inspiration almost solely from Japanese pop culture. Anything hot in Japan is hot in Bangkok, whereas the influence of other Asian countries like Taiwan, Korea or Hong Kong is non-existent. Moreover, with no prominent Thai anime or manga, Thai teens and pre-teens have a voracious appetite for the latest fare from Japan. The only Thai animation around tends to feature crusty, old caricatures portraying cute toddlers and fat old men. Though Japanese anime is expensive, plenty of Thai teens kick out US $80 a month to get their fill of it. The younger teens, especially, like things Japanese - usually preferring them to US fare. The Japanese shapes and styles are more intriguing, the color brighter, the shock treatment more vivid.

Nu is dressed in a yellow shirt, shiny red miniskirt, platform shoes and pink sunglasses. He's 15. (Just kidding; she's a girl.) Like half the crowd roaming the plaza, she sports a plastic backpack and is cackling with a crowd of friends. But ask her for a photo and she coyly places one hand over her mouth as she giggles and hides behind a friend. Oops. My mistake. Pardon me for thinking that someone decked up like a Christmas tree in June is screaming for attention and would want to have their picture taken.

"We like to dress crazy because that's how we express ourselves," explains Tor, a fifteen-year-old boy wearing make-up and a halter top over fade jeans. (Not kidding.) His gang of boys is likewise wearing make-up and jeans, though one is wearing a pink miniskirt and clutching a panda bear handbag. "When we come here, we're not dressing up to get attention. We dress up to show that we're not kids anymore; we're growing up and we have our own identities and can choose our own style." Uh-huh.

What do parents make of this? "We don't see our parents that much because most of our parents work full-time. They are busy earning money for the family, and they see no harm in us dressing up, because it doesn't



BANGKOK HANGOUTS

SIAM SQUARE

A labyrinthine shopping mall overflowing with boutiques, cafes, milk bars, ice cream shops, movie theaters, magazine and music stalls, this is the grazing ground of all teens and university students. The fashion action culminates in an outdoor plaza called Center Point, where trendy teens go to strut, pose, socialize, and observe.

SHOPPING MALLS

The cool, air-conditioned halls of Siam Center, Emporium, World Trade Center, and Siam Discovery Center provide escape from the city's sweltering heat for gangs of friends to roam the fast food outlets and pinball arcades; shop for clothes and make up; see movies; and make photo stickers.

DISCO BOWLING

After dark, these bowling alleys switch off the lights, turn on the neon and pump up the volume. Teens can wear their latest fashions and look good as they bowl, eat, drink and dance to the blaring music.

BAR STRIPS

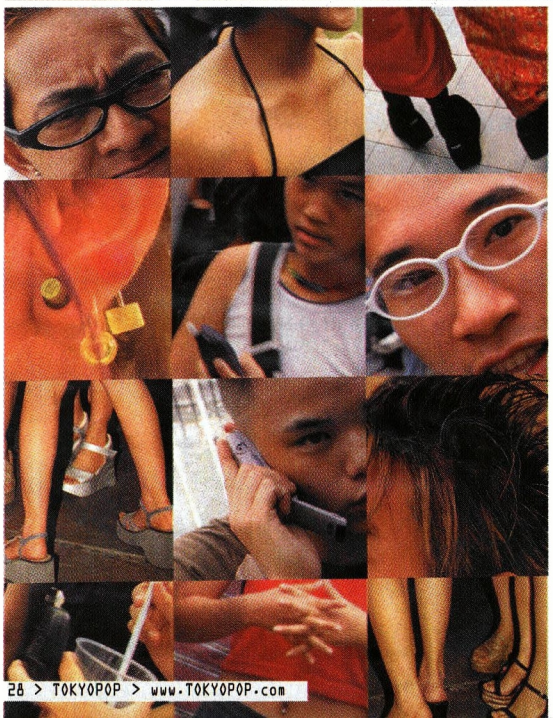
Royal City Avenue, Sutthisarn Road, Silom Soi 4 and Thonglor Soi 21 are roads where clusters of bars are packed side by side, each blaring out rocket-decibel dance music. Come nightfall, herds of trendy youth flock to these places for the inexpensive food, beer, whiskey, and socializing. With the crowds spilling out onto the street and overflowing from one bar into the next, these are the prime people watching locales.

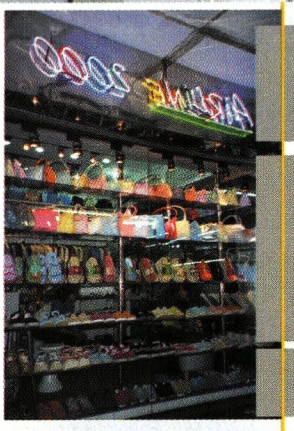
hurt anyone – it's only clothing. We're not hurting anyone by dying our hair or wearing funny glasses."

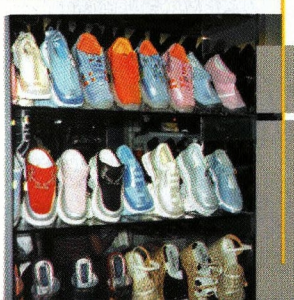
While adults are surprised at the lengths today's youth go to in dress and behavior ("We didn't dare to wear tube tops on the streets when I was a young lad," you'll hear from any 30-year-old), the outrageous fashion of Thai teens is not seen as an act of deviance or rebellion.

"These kids could be doing much worse," says Sasie Vadhanapanich (pronounced, "Smith"), a Bangkok consumer trends analyst who specializes in the youth market. "They could be doing drugs, smoking, drinking, having sex, but they're not. They're just

dressing up to say 'Hey, we're not babies any more.' All Thais have to wear school uniforms from kindergarten all the way through university. Getting out of those uniforms is not a form of rebellion, in the Western sense that you are breaking some social code. To these kids, its just a way to say, 'hey, we have our own identities and our own tastes.'"







Min and her girlfriend are wearing identical pink tight T-shirts, little pink skirts and big pink shoes. They have pink backpacks and walk around holding hands. "We dress alike because we are saying, 'Look, we are best friends'," explains Min, showing me their matching pink purses. "We have so many more pink clothes at home. Pink is our favorite color." Surprise!

Like the cicadas that mysteriously and noisily appear for about a week then disappear, fads have a short life in Bangkok. The general rule is, the louder the trend, the shorter its reign - once you've made your big bang fashion statement, its over and you move on to the next big thing.

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SONIA COULING

MTV VJ AND THAI SUPERMODEL

I first met Sonia when I jumped into my friend's SUV in Bangkok last year. Sonia was at the wheel and they'd come to pick me up for a night out on the town. Wearing body-hugging white jeans and a skin-tight white top, Sonia's head was covered with beads that she'd left in from a recent photo shoot. With her incredibly elongated limbs constantly unfolding and waving around the steering wheel, and her perfectly round head swirling as she talked, she reminded me of an animated, incredibly beautiful praying mantis. Tall and skinny, she's instantly recognizable to all as the half-Thai, half-British supermodel whose face is plastered on countless Thai and Singaporean magazine covers, TV commercials, and MTV Asia. In the Mexican restaurant where we started our evening, she got up a couple of times to pose for snapshots with fans who wanted to take a picture with her. So what's it like to be one of the coolest beautiful people in Southeast Asia?

TOKYOPOP: How did you get started as an MTV VJ?
SC: I started as a model and when MTV came to Asia they were looking for local VJs. It seemed a natural step to move from modeling into TV.

TP: When did you start modeling?
SC: In the Eighties, when I was a teenager. The Thais love models that are half-Thai and half-Western because the look is exotic – Western bone structure with Thai features and complexion. If you look around at the most popular Thai pop stars and movie stars these days, you'll see that most of them are half–Thai and half–Western because for the Thai audience that look is the height of beauty. It's also a very modern look, compared to the kind of models they used twenty years ago.

TP: Models usually get to wear gorgeous clothes, but what was the worst thing you ever had to wear as a model?
SC: I was a model during the Eighties – that's bad enough! My hair was all frizzed out, and the outfits had huge shoulder pads. Imagine a 15-year-old skinny little

DOING IT ALL NIGHT LONG IN BANGKOK

A BANGKOK TWENTY-SOMETHING TAKES YOU ON HER USUAL SATURDAY NIGHT PUB-CRAWL.

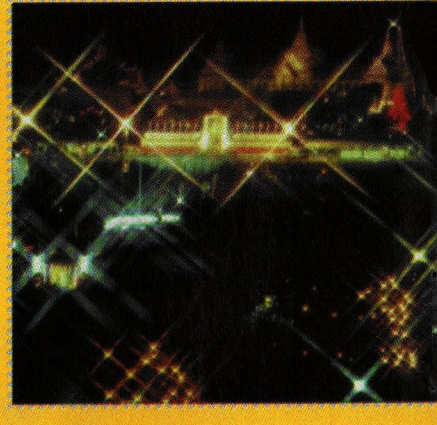
7:00 PM: Almost dinner-time and my mobile's rung only twice since lunchtime. I know it's not broken, but I keep checking it every half hour. What's up? I'm NOT spending another Saturday night at home.

7:30 PM: Phone has rung three times in past half hour, everything back to normal. I'm cool again. Alright – gotta shower and dress before Bin (my boyfriend) gets ancy.

8:00 PM: Drive to Bin's house to pick him up. Bin has a motorcycle, and I refuse to ride on it because it messes my hair and makes my clothes stink like an exhaust pipe from whizzing through the Bangkok pollution.

8:45PM: We're at Fou Bar in Siam Square. Actually it's a café, a "model café" – whatever that means – though I've yet to see a single model prance past my table. And I come here a lot. I like this place because it's near lots of shops, and decorated just like a scene from a magazine. My friends are already settled at a table, all busy yacking on their cell phones.

9:20 PM: Dinner is Thai food, though some of us have already eaten an early dinner at home with our parents and are only picking at our fried fish cakes. It's the usual routine, the obligatory dinnertime with the family before we let loose for the night. I'm not here for more than 20 minutes before we're debating where to go next – the new Keanu Reeves movie or straight to a pub where we can hang out and drink.



Sonia on . . .
BELLYBUTTONS: "I like mine because I clean it and it's clean and it's a perfect hole."

Sonia on . . .
THAI MEN: "[They] can never be faithful."

girl with huge shoulder pads and flowered earrings!

TP: Hmmm, that doesn't sound so bad. Anything more embarrassing than that, that you want to share with us? What about the time the *Singapore Straits Times* headlines said "Sonya Couling's breasts and Ricky Martin's butt!"
SC: Okay. That was during Ricky Martin's first concert in Singapore in 1998. I was on stage and my friend Mike Casem urged the audience to cheer me to dance, because I love Latin dancing. I was wearing a tube top and I didn't want to dance in it, but the crowd was pressuring me, so I had to dance. I thought I would do a little shake my bon bon. So I shook, and then my top fell off while I was on stage in front of everybody.

TP: Have you ever had your fortune told?
SC: Oh yeah! Always! And they always tell me "do not expect love to be what you want it to be." Great. They all say the same thing, that I will have success in work, career, money and friends, but never in love.

TP: That's not true, is it?
SC: So far from past experience it seems quite true. Once after a break up I went to a temple and became a nun.

TP: Do you have a Thai boyfriend?
SC: No. I have this thing in my head that Thai men can never be faithful, and I haven't seen one Thai man who is monogamous. Find me one. But I like Asian men, you know, and I eventually want to end up with an Asian. Or I don't mind what nationality as long as they're faithful.

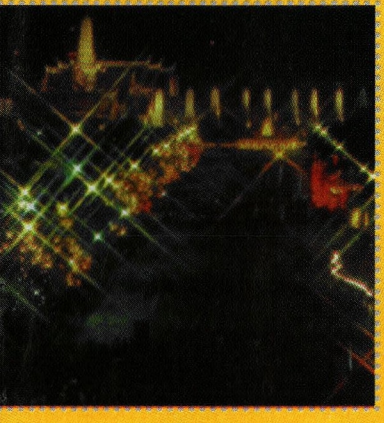
TP: What's the best date you've been on?
SC: Once a man took me on a trip to Paris for lunch and then Disney world and then back to London. A one-day trip. That was nice.

TP: What's your favorite part of your body?
SC: My bellybutton. It's not too deep, and it's not one of those bellybuttons that sticks out. When you look at pictures of female bellybuttons and they are so deep, or they're dark or dirty. I like mine because I clean it and it's clean and it's a perfect hole. [Editor's note: We promise not to use this quote out of context.]

TP: What do you do to keep your figure so slim?
SC: I've never stepped into a gym once. I smoke, I dance, I swim. But then again, I'm always on the run. When you have a lot on your mind or have a lot to do, you tend to lose it all fast.

TP: What's the wildest thing you've done lately?
SC: My driving! I've driven wildly and raced down streets, I've almost killed a dog, almost killed myself, and almost killed a man. I actually hit a motorbike once, and it went flying.

—Chami Jotisalikorn



11:15 PM: We've ended up at RCA (Royal City Avenue), and I don't even know the name of the place we're in. When Bin was off to the bathroom, the bartender slips me his number and another cheezy line: "So haven't we met before?" Ugh!

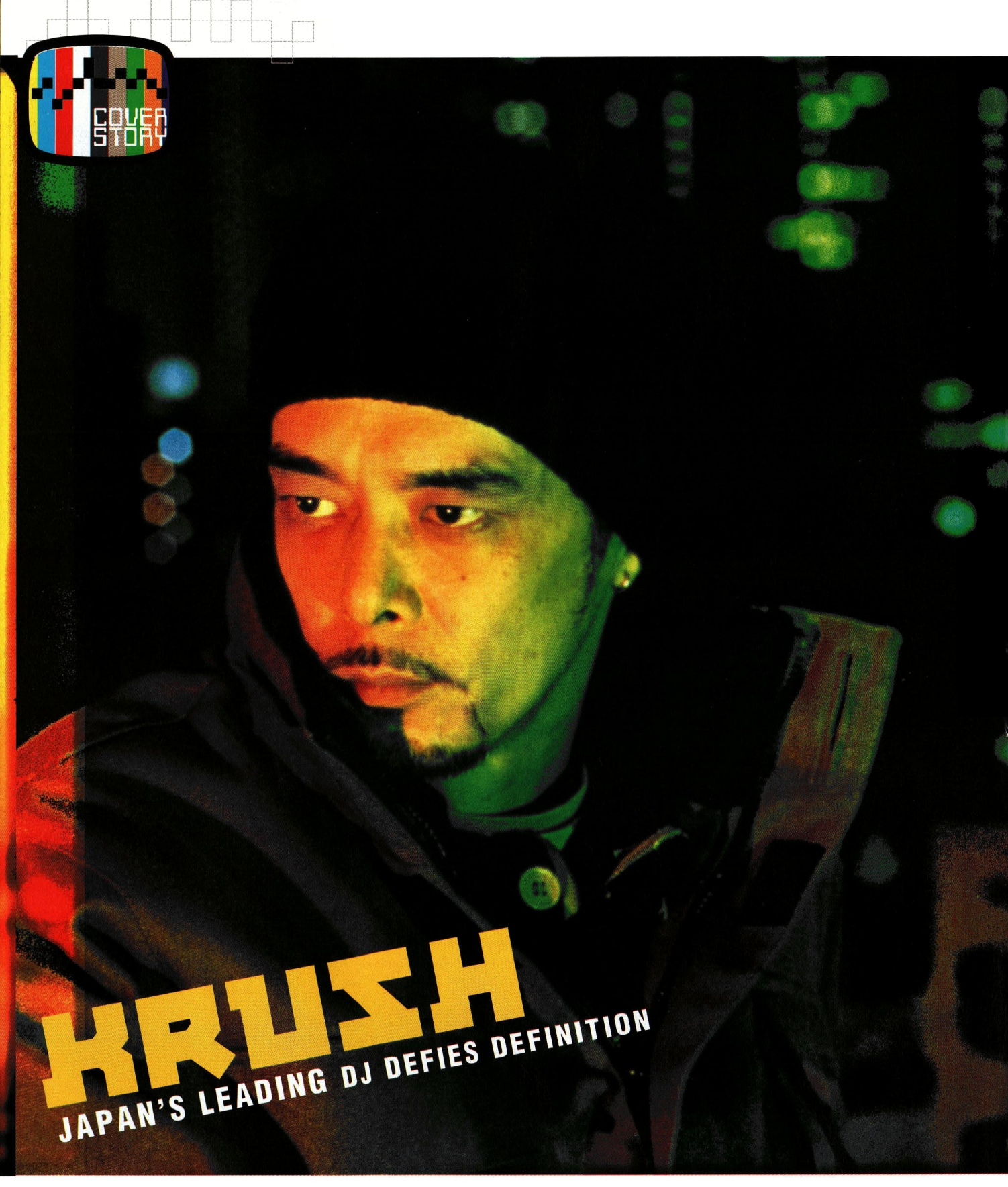
12:35 AM: Okay, now we're at a club. Tami is sulking in the corner (her man just hit on another girl), while Jane is shaking her booty on the dance floor. Bin ran into some old high school friends, and I'm hungry, again. We order some barbecued squid, spring rolls and green mango. What's the name of this place anyway?

1:30 AM: This is getting old. We've lost two of our original gang and gained three more in our group who want to head to Silom Soi 4. The guys are sloshed but Bin can still drive. I'm getting really sleepy really quickly. I pull the two phone numbers I got out of my pocket and hand them to Bin: "You're a lucky guy," I say. He smiles and gives me a napkin with "Lisa" scribbled on it with lipstick. "You're the lucky one," he winks. Asshole.

2:00 AM: (I don't remember.)

2:40 AM: Back on the dance floor, soaked with sweat. My hair is sticking to my head and, thank god, my tube top is also sticking to my body. I look at Bin, "You know what time it is?" We get the friends together and head over for an early morning snack of rice noodles before I drop my boyfriend back to his house and drive myself home!

5:50 AM: Cell phone rings. Some guy says I gave him my number at the club. "Don't call again, freak!"



KRUSH

JAPAN'S LEADING DJ DEFIES DEFINITION

DJ KRUSH (known to his wife and kid by the name of Hideaki Ishi) has, in recent years, come to be the most respected and renowned figure in the ever-expanding world of Japanese DJs. The key to his success may be his genre-blind approach to mixing and creating music. Though originally rooted in hip-hop, Krush has come to the top of his field by feeling free to draw from whatever styles of music that move him, be it jazz, classical, world music, or classic break beats. The music he creates from his free form palette defies description. Is it hip-hop? Is it jazz? Is it ambient? It's all of them, and none of them.

Krush got his start in 1987 with his Tokyo rap crew, Krush Posse. After spending years rocking Tokyo DJ battles, he disbanded the crew and moved to Europe. In the UK, he allied himself with James Lavelle's ultra-cool Mo'Wax label, commencing a solo career that would soon bring him the attention and respect of international audiences. From his debut, 1994's *Krush*, to 1999's *Kakusei*, Krush has wowed the world with his kaleidoscope of musical textures. His world-class status has led to collaborations with a vast array of the world's most respected DJs and MCs, including The Roots, Nas, Guru, DJ Shadow, and MC Solaar. He's also become an in-demand remixer, lending his talents to remixes of jazz legend Miles Davis, k.d. lang, and Galliano, to name a few.

DJ Krush's latest offering to the world is also his first ever mix CD, titled *Code4109*. (The disc is 4,109 seconds long.) The disc is simply the man and his turntables, and more closely approximates the experience of a DJ Krush live set than his studio CDs. The disc mixes many disparate musical elements, ranging from jazzman John Klemmer to DJ Cam to rap bad boy Eminem. The U.S. domestic release of *Code4109* offered Krush the opportunity to come to America for a short series of live dates. While in Los Angeles, he made the time to have a chat with TOKYOPOP.

The initial prospect of meeting DJ Krush was intimidating, considering the cool-as-ice demeanor of his public persona. Contrary to expectations, he was immediately friendly and casual. Neatly dressed in his trademark cap and shades, Krush grabbed himself a beer and kicked back on the poolside balcony of his Hollywood hotel room as he opened up to TOKYOPOP.

TP: What do you go by? Would Krush-san be OK?
DJK: Just call me Krush.

TP: Before getting into hip-hop, what were your early musical influences and tastes?
DJK: When I was in junior high I listened to rock music. After that, I rode around on a motorcycle and hung out with my friends. Basically, I got away from music for a while.

TP: How were you exposed to the US hip-hop scene?
DJK: In 1982 or 1983, there was a movie called *Wild Style* (a documentary on the New York hip-hop culture), and I found the DJ'ing to be interesting.

TP: How did hip-hop make you feel when you first heard it?
DJK: First of all, it was a surprise. Take a look at break dancing. From a Japanese perspective, the movements are un-human like. When I was watching the movie, I felt as though there was something underneath the dancers that revolved them.

TP: Was the attraction just musical, or did the street culture and fashion play an element in its attraction as well?
DJK: No, I was attracted to everything. First of all, I was surprised at how well graffiti was done on the walls. I mean, these people did their work in the dark while hiding from the cops. Also, I was surprised by the way DJ'ing was done. Using records and spinning them with your hands was something I had never imagined.

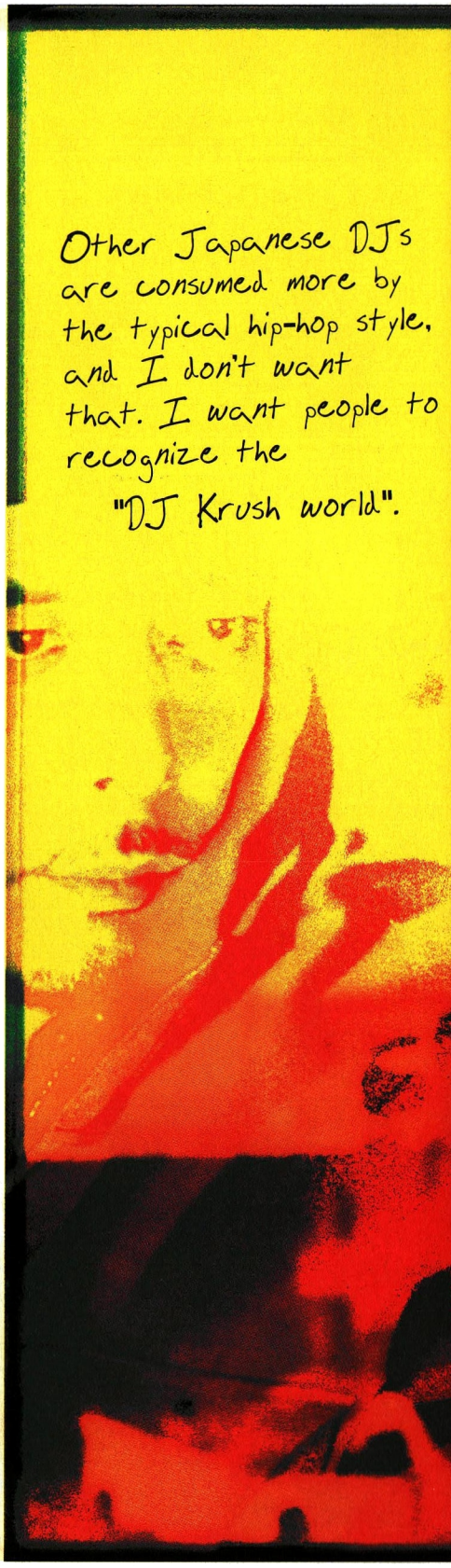
TP: What was the reaction in Tokyo when you debuted the Krush Posse (1987)?
DJK: People who liked my music were really into it; however, when I first took my demo tape into the record company, all the executives were fairly old. They didn't understand my style and music, but more importantly they questioned if my records would sell at all. At that point, I felt that it was best to break up Krush Posse and leave Japan for Europe.

TP: How did you come up with the name DJ Krush?
DJK: I got this name when I was doing Krush Posse. There were two Black guys who I toured with and since I didn't have a DJ name at the time, I asked them to give me a name. They named me Krush. Together with my brother whom I DJ'ed with, we were called Krush Band because the guys thought we were crazy. It started off as a joke but the name stuck with me.

TP: How do you think your Japanese heritage influences your take on American urban music?
DJK: In the beginning, I didn't know how to DJ. It was all imitation. But I realized that copying wasn't going to get me anywhere. I mean, no one is going to take me in by just copying American urban music. So I tried to absorb the style and music and incorporate it into my own music. Even to this day, I have a difficult time with developing my own distinct style.

TP: The Japanese language has a rhythm of it's own. How do you feel about the use of the language in hip-hop?
DJK: Since I'm not a rapper, I don't really know. However, there is a certain flow to the words that is the same in all hip-hop. People say rap shouldn't be done in Japanese. But there are lots of good rappers in Tokyo. Whether it's good or not depends on how it's done [not on the language].

TP: Do you think that Japanese hip-hop/rap has developed into a legitimate scene in its own right?
DJK: It's really popular in the Japanese

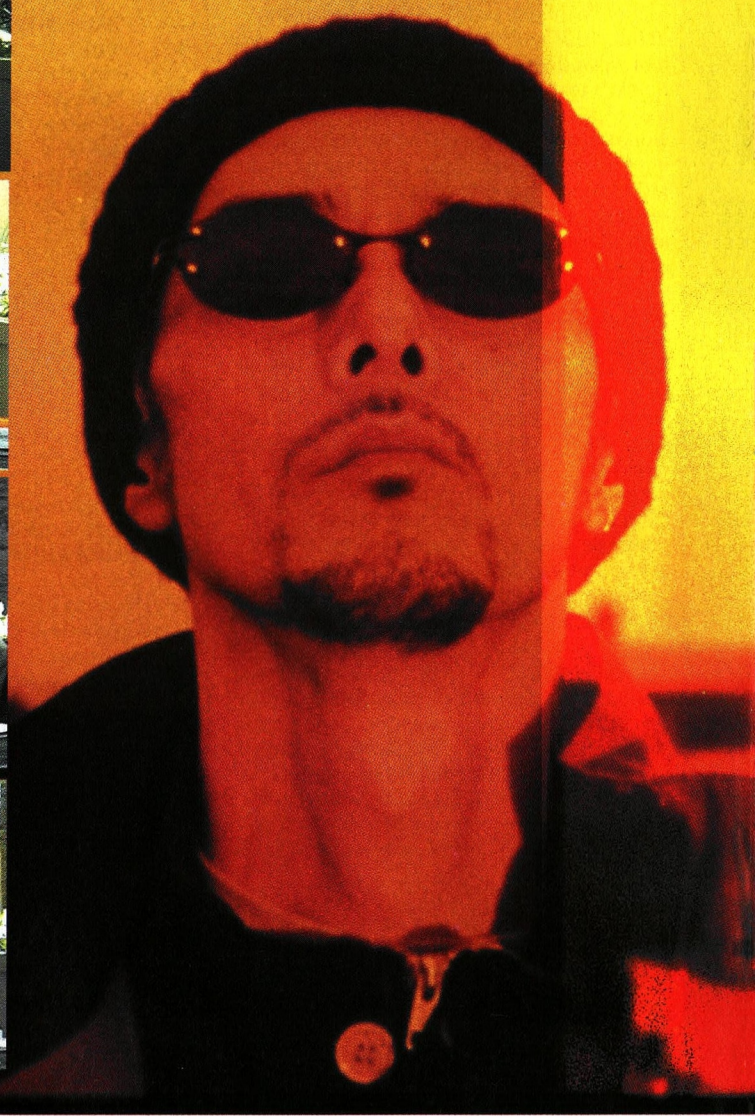


In the beginning, I didn't know how to DJ. It was all imitation. But I realized that copying wasn't going to get me anywhere. I mean, no one is going to take me in by just copying American urban music.

scene, as is R&B. But if you asked me if I'd want Japanese hip-hop and rap to be brought to the US, that would be a different story. I would definitely oppose bringing them to the US. I mean, these artists go to tanning salons, have dreads, and perform using below average English. They may be accepted in Japan, but overseas, it's obvious that they would be laughed at. Ideally, I would like Japanese hip-hop to have its own style, because right now a lot of it is just imitation, and that's not going to be accepted in the US. I feel hip-hop music in Japan is about three years behind compared to music in the US or UK. Gradually, some artists here have realized that imitation of American/European music is the wrong approach and are beginning to get bored with the lack of originality in their music.

TP: Do you feel that Japanese DJs differ from their Western counterparts?
DJK: I don't know about that. At the same time, I hope we do differ from our Western counterparts. We have a general feel that is different from them and it would be nice if we could incorporate that through our music and style.

TP: How does your approach differ from your fellow Japanese DJs?



DJ KRUSH LIVE AT THE EL REY THEATER, LOS ANGELES - 6/13/00.

The anticipation in the audience was great as DJ Krush walked onto the stage of the sold out El Rey Theater for a rare live DJ performance. Krush made a theatrical entrance, lifting his shirt to show the audience is tattoo laden back, his arms raised as if he were a prizefighter about to step into the ring for the big match. Once the grooves started, the emphasis shifted from the man to his music. And what music it was! Though he used many of his trademark looping break beats, the majority of the show could not be described as hip-hop. His layering of sonic textures, drones, and beats was more psychedelic and ambient than it was danceable, but that didn't keep the sweaty audience from hanging onto every move. At one point, when his mix was at it's most ethereal, he abruptly broke into Public Enemy's "Fight The Power," bringing the crowd to a frenzy. DJs as concert headliners often leave audiences under whelmed, but DJ Krush comes through as a truly engaging artist and musician on stage as well as on disc.

How'd you hear about Krush?

—I heard about DJ Krush about 2 years ago. I didn't know too much about Japanese hip-hop but because of DJ Krush and other DJs like him, I began to like J hip-hop . . . more power to the Japanese hip-hop scene!!!

How would you characterize his music?

—. . . jungle style

—It's a blend of trip-hop, trance, jazz . . . very mellow, very fluid. It's just a fusion.

What was your first impression of Krush?

—Experimental, something no one's done before . . . the Japanese have their own style.

What do you think about Krush?

—Honestly, I don't know too much, but I'm willing to listen to it so I can be a better judge. I have an open mind, and coming here is a good opportunity.

On Japanese hip-hop not having soul:

—I think it's a bullshit stereotype. Asian hip-hop has a different type of vibe, a subtle blending of different styles that's hard to define.

—Soul is your essence just coming out.

—They definitely got soul. Just listen to Fantastic Plastic, Cibo Matto . . . it's soulful stuff.

—DJ Krush is the shit. His style is hella different from all the rest, cause he's the OG. It's like all the other DJs try to step up but they can't match Krush. Even though he's from Japan, he's the shit. I think Asian's they got all the soul. People think us yellow people ain't got no soul but we got all the soul!!!

—I think no matter where you're from hip-hop has soul. If its real, then it has soul. But radio mainstream stuff doesn't.

—Whack people exist everywhere . . . real hip-hop exists in Japan

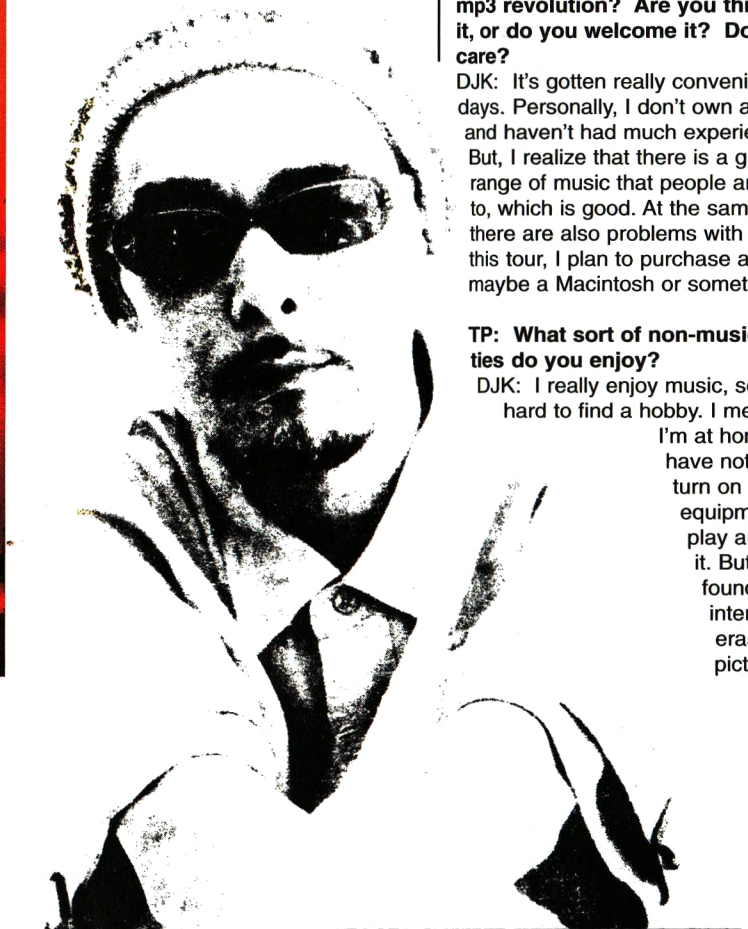
—No soul? Nah! It definitely has soul!

DJK: I don't really incorporate rap into my music. Also, I sometimes use trumpets in the instrumental mix. Not many people have that style. They're consumed more by the typical hip-hop style, and I don't want that. I want people to recognize the "DJ Krush world".

TP: Since coming to international prominence, have you gotten the opportunity to collaborate with any of your musical heroes?
DJK: I've performed with the Roots and some other groups; however, all of my musical heroes, such as Jimi Hendrix and Miles Davis, have passed away. I would like to perform with them in heaven. If that happens, I'll be sure to be ready with my musical equipment.

TP: Are there any musicians that you would like to perform with who are alive?
DJK: Yes, and I'll try to make that happen in my next album, but for now, I can't mention any names.

TP: You've done remixes for artists outside of the hip-hop world such as Miles Davis and Kodo. Who else would you enjoy working with?
DJK: I would like to do live work with Kodo, the Japanese taiko group. I really enjoy traditional Japanese instruments such as the taiko or shamisen. Sometimes I wonder how much fun it would be if we could play the shamisen like Jimi Hendrix did with his guitar. It would be awesome if we could play a track with that.



TP: How does your approach to DJ'ing live differ from your methods in the recording studio?
DJK: In terms of DJ'ing, there is a basic foundation already set for you, and I just build upon that. However, in making an original track, there is no such foundation, and you have to work from the very bottom. I see it like this. When producing a song, you have to dig your own pool, put in the water, and swim. Basically, you do everything on your own. On the other hand, I see DJ'ing as if there is already a pool for me to swim in.

TP: If you had to describe your style of music to the uninitiated, what would you say? How would you label yourself musically?
DJK: I wouldn't necessarily describe it as hip-hop. I would explain that my style of music is in the genre of DJ Krush. Hmm, they probably wouldn't understand that, huh? (Laughs) But seriously, I pass along what I feel in my head through my arms and hands. There is no way to explain my style.

TP: When not in DJ mode, what music do you listen to for personal enjoyment?
DJK: I don't really listen to that much music. When I'm at home, I sometimes play jazz music in the background. Other than that, I take my kid to the park on a bicycle with a cold beer in my pocket and just hang out.

TP: What do you think of the whole mp3 revolution? Are you threatened by it, or do you welcome it? Do you even care?
DJK: It's gotten really convenient nowadays. Personally, I don't own a computer and haven't had much experience with it. But, I realize that there is a growth in the range of music that people are exposed to, which is good. At the same time, there are also problems with mp3s. After this tour, I plan to purchase a computer, maybe a Macintosh or something.

TP: What sort of non-musical activities do you enjoy?
DJK: I really enjoy music, so it was hard to find a hobby. I mean, when I'm at home and have nothing to do, I turn on my DJ equipment and play around with it. But recently I found some interest in cameras . . . I take pictures of anything, but mostly of my family. It's really difficult, but I see some similarities with the work I do.

TP: What do you think the future holds for urban music?
DJK: Ideally, for Japanese hip-hop music, I would like to see a distinct Japanese style continue to grow and come into its own. But I can't really speak in terms of the overall future for urban music.

—David Ponak

- Interview conducted by Kay Sasatomi
- Special thanks to LA based DJ and Producer, Tony Watson, and Anthony Puglisi
- Translation by Yoshitake Mukai

DJ KRUSH DISCOGRAPHY

Meiso (Album) 7.21.95

Meiso – Another Maze (Single) 4.1.96

Ki-Oku (Album) 8.8.96

Milight (Album) 11.1.96

Holonic – The Self Megamix (Album) 9.1.97

Kakusei (Album) 9.9.98

Code 4109 (Album) 1.21.00 – in Japan

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ASIAN HEROINES

WHY DO ASIAN ACTRESSES MAKE BETTER ACTION HEROES?

HEROIC TRIO

What actress could play a brutal hit woman that could break a wrestler's neck with her thighs, outshoot a building full of heavily armed police and can still look sexier than Angelina Jolie and Sharon Stone combined? If no actress comes to mind it's because at this point in time there are no "American Actresses" out there who are either capable of, or allowed to put this kind of performance on film. In Asia, however, this type of female hero and anti-hero is quite the norm.

Fans of Asian cinema have come to watch the likes of Chingmy Yau and Carrie Ng (Naked Killer) casually blow someone's brains out and still look sexy and feminine. And how many women could match moves with Jackie Chan on screen like Maggie Cheung in *Police Story, Police Story 2* and *Police Story 3* aka *Supercop*? I don't think you'll find Julia Roberts or Meg Ryan jumping dirt bikes onto moving trains, or trading blows with anyone anytime soon.

The fact is Asian starlets aren't merely confined to action or exploitive roles; most of them have experience playing straight drama, romantic comedy or even chop socky . . . sometimes in the same movie.

Don't think for a second that this amazing balance of sensuality and violence is confined to Hong Kong actresses. Who didn't love Oshima Yukari in *Angel Terminators, Angel Kickboxers* or *Avenging Quartet*? There have been a slew of "girls with guns" movies over the years coming out of Japan and Taiwan. For well over thirty years it has not been unusual to find a sword-wielding or Uzi-toting diva painting the screen blood-red in theaters all over Europe and Asia.

Japan has been producing powerful female heroines as far back as the 60's with movies like the *Blind Bat* series starring Yoko Matsuyama and the unforgettable *Lady Snowblood* films of the 70's starring Meiko Kaji. These women always had a powerful sense of honor and dignity, even when they were acting at their most violent extremes. "Girls with guns" movies continue to flourish in Asia today, both in the underground video market and with mainstream filmmakers.

Yes, we have Buffy doing her best to look cute while she fights vampires and other bad creatures. Then there's Rene Harlan who tried so desperately and with little success to make Geena Davis into the first female action hero in America with *The Long Kiss Goodnight* and *Cutthroat Island*. Of course I should probably mention *Barb Wire*. I think Pamela Anderson's . . . uh, "talents" were wasted in that one. I have to say that *The Long Kiss Goodnight* was a really a fine film and that no other stateside actress has ever looked quite as good firing an Uzi while flying though the air as Geena Davis, but there was something missing. Some quality that might be cultural, might be a byproduct of the Hollywood system or it may just be that in the United States we're stuck with the puritanical belief that women are the weaker sex. If so, that belief probably gets tied up into how we portray women in action films and in films in general. Maybe we don't want to see Drew Barrymore with an automatic weapon or Sandra Bullock doing much more than driving fast with a perky smile on her lips. I hope that this isn't the case or at the very least I hope that this attitude is beginning to shift.

Perhaps there is a ray of hope. *Tomb Raider* is going to be made into a film as soon as they get a decent script. I only hope they think long and hard on the casting. *Naked Killer* and numerous other great Asian action films with strong female leads are currently being developed here in Hollywood. Let's pray they get it right this time. We'll put that *Le Femme Nikita* thing behind us and look towards the future when we have the American counterpart to Michelle Yeoh (*Tomorrow Never Dies*) and Masumi Miyazaki (*XX: Beautiful Weapon*). Yes, we noticed that the first Bond girl to do stunts, kick ass and be sexy was Michelle Yeoh. Too bad the studio wouldn't let her and Pierce kiss at the end. But that's a whole other topic.

—Brian Puterman

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Hi-Tech Toilet

Not your ordinary comfort can

While traveling through Asia a few years ago I encountered numerous types of sanitary commodes, ranging from green grass on a dirt floor to that porcelain hole in the ground I'd later come to know as "the squatter." In the old days, the squat toilet was nothing more than a hole that lead your treasured remains to the hungry pigs beneath your "throne." As technology evolved, some inventive guy (rumor has it was a guy called Thomas Crapper [1837-1910]) thought of a flushing mechanism that washed waste away to a cesspool. Throughout much of Asia today, the squat toilet is the preferred *modus operandi*.

Dr. Bindesawar Pathak of the Sulabh International Museum of Toilets in New Delhi, India, parallels the evolution of toilets with rising standards in human homes. In other words, when Man finally figured out how to build a house, his next project was to take a dump in it. The unbearable stench of the poo lingered around houses for centuries until some other genius figured out that it'd be best to dispose of the dumpage after each sitting. The race had begun to design a better sanitation system. The disposal conscious tried everything from "chamber pots" (aka, "cup o' crap") that were manually cleaned, to toilets that protruded out of the top floor of a house – either way, the goods were poured out the window at the end of the day, splashing the feet and faces of those below. Toileting technology remained in the cesspools of human ingenuity until the dawn of the 16th century, when John Harrington invented the water closet, and, just over 100 years later, in 1738, JF Brondel introduced the first valve type flush toilet. As for Mr. Crapper, we just liked his name.

Fast forward to the present.

In Japan, the world's second-richest nation, 30 percent of Japanese people live in homes that are not hooked up to sewer lines or septic tanks and have no flush toilets. For these people (with unusually muscular quads), squatting is still a way of life. Despite the pervasiveness of the squatter, super-luxurious high-tech toilets have become extremely popular in Japan.

Imagine a comfort can with a "Control Tower" (runway not included) that comes with a digital clock to tell you how long it's taken you to drop the luggage. Among the many flashy buttons is one that anal-retentive types will appreciate, a control for the temperature of the water sprayed onto your bum. Below the temp control is a blow-dryer that's designed to eliminate the need for toilet tissue (and, in some cultures, the left hand!). Other buttons automatically open and close the lid – the male icon lifts both lid and seat, while the female icon lifts only the lid. Some models even have a hand-held remote control. (Just be sure to leave it within reach!). It

seems that the only thing Japanese toilet-makers have yet to master is a device to help men with their aim!

Toto toilet company, the king of flushing feces, sells about $400 million worth of high-tech toilets a year, which accounts for approximately half of Japan's total toilet market.

Judging from sales alone, it's clear that Toto has gone to great lengths to make its toilets, bathtubs and other products user-friendly. An integral part of the high-tech toilet-making process includes data on the best features of a toilet, and at the company's "human engineering laboratory," where volunteers sit in a Toto bathtub with electrodes strapped to their skull, to measure brain waves and the effects of bathing on the human body.

To ensure an ergonomic fit with the Japanese booty, I mean, body, the Toto development team ran tests to find the exact positioning of the anus (you heard right – anus: that holy passageway to water world) when your big bum is on the toilet seat. The test was simple: 1) Peel off your undies; 2) Find the wire inside the bowl and point it right under your butt hole; 3) Lick your fingers – just kidding! (Toto management had to beg employees, on their hands and knees, to do the tests.)

WE'RE NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE!

JAPANESE TOILET MAKER TOTO BRINGS HIGH TECH LATRINE STATESIDE

TOILET FEATURES

- Noisemaker button: masks bathroom flatulence with calm flushing sound. (This thing almost put me to sleep.)
- Blow-dryer (Butt hairs never had it so good!)
- Bidet button: a squirt gun shaped like a toothbrush cleans your behind with a stream of warm water (comes with temperature control.)
- Urinalysis button – version 2.1 will double as a lie detector .
- Anti-germ coating (warning: may cause rashes on sensitive skin.)
- Digital clock (so you can time yourself doing the crossword puzzle.)
- Power Lid-opens and shuts under command of remote.
- Price? $2,000 – $4,000

KEY FINDINGS OF THE TOTO TOILET TESTS:

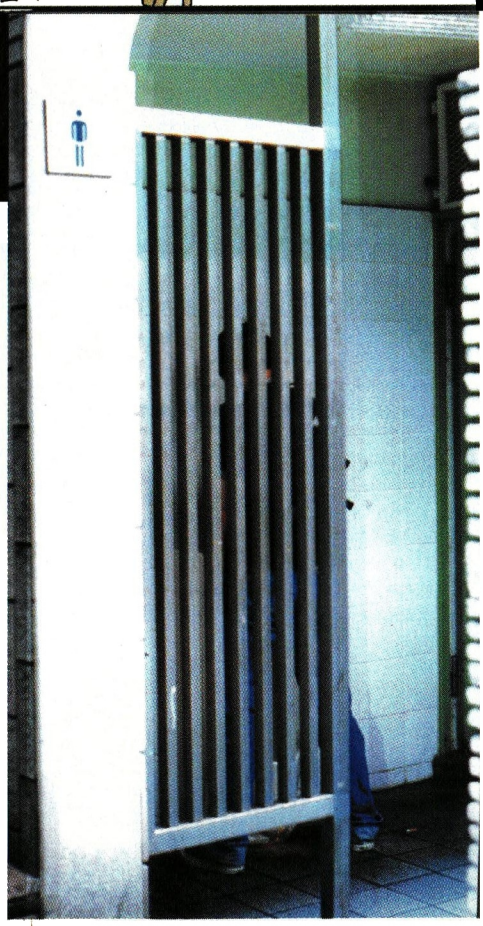
• ANGLE OF SQUIRT: Depending on wind speed and humidity, a 43-degree angle from the water surface ensures minimal splash-back.
• SQUIRTING SPEED: 500cc per minute (Whoa! Why don't they use a fire hose instead!)
• QUANTITY OF SQUIRT: 900cc of "Mr. 'bum rush' Clean" will get those hard to reach areas squeaky clean.
• SQUIRTING TEMPERATURE: 38 degrees Celsius, just a tad below boiling.

Although the appeal of these advanced toilets may seem obvious – just imagine the comfort of having an automatic seat warmer in the dead of winter, or the strange satisfaction of tepid water squirting on your backsides and bottom each time you do the deed – the popularity of techy toilets may also have distinct cultural influences. Some have said that the "comfort cans" make the bathroom a place where people want to spend time; a place where you can "unload" after a hard day's work, and flush your worries down the drain.

While Americans can certainly identify with the need for undisturbed private time, the necessity may be even more apparent in Japan, where homes are often so small that the bathroom is the only place where one can be alone. Given these circumstances, it seems that toilets are no longer just dirty holes in the ground; at least in Japan, they're a flush away from heaven.

シャワートイレ
Shower Toilet

—Eddie Hsu



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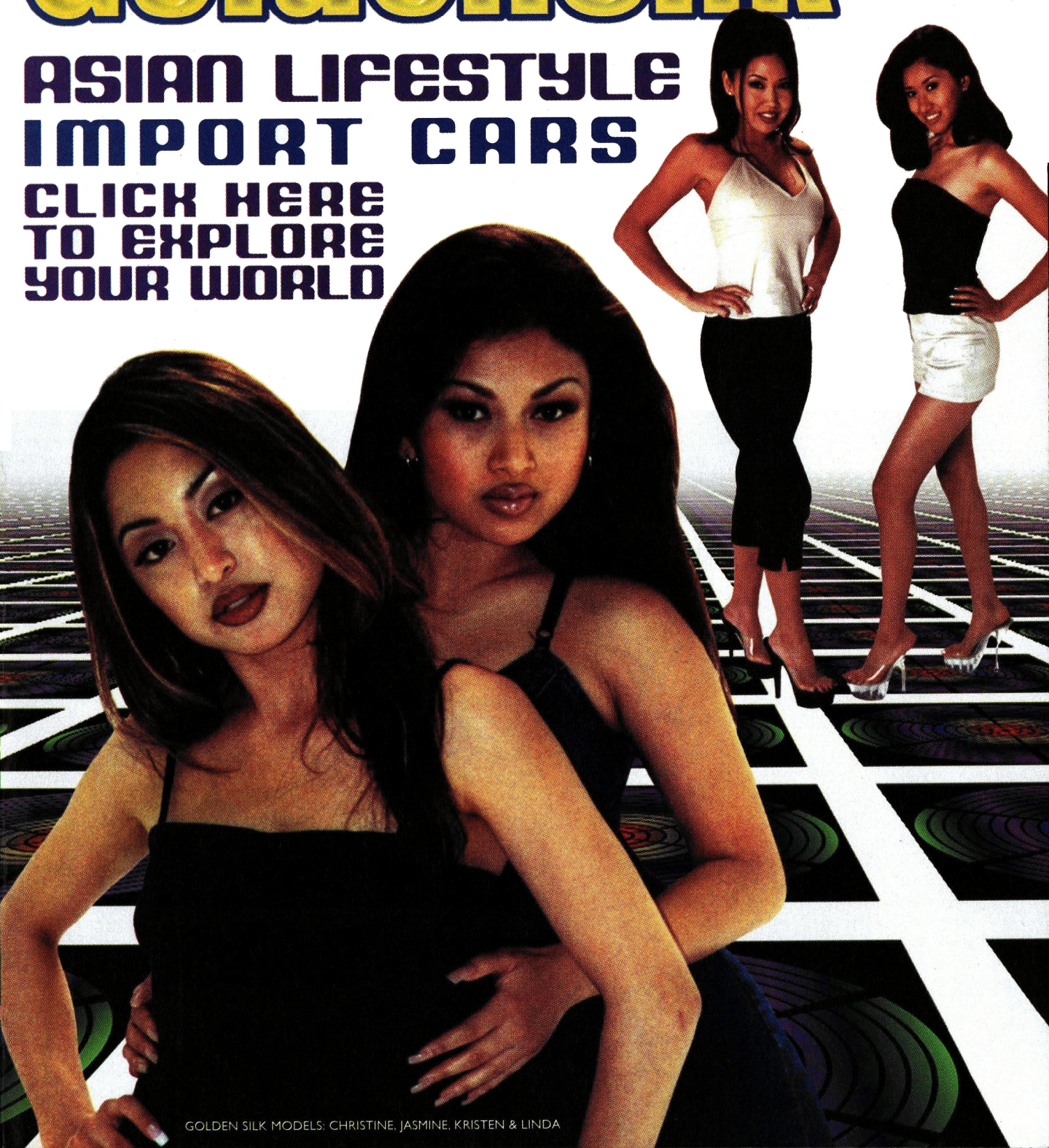


GOLDEN SILK MODELS: CHRISTINE, JASMINE, KRISTEN & LINDA

GO-CON!

If the life of a swinger is as foreign to you as a Japanese movie, then kill two birds with one stone by watching *Go-Con!*, a hilarious flick about three swingers in Tokyo. *Go-Con!*, subtitled, "Japanese Love Culture," refers to the groups of young swingers (guys and gals alike) who hang out at the local pubs and play drinking games all night. Their main goal: To hook up with someone (or something) for the night, or forever . . . whatever – while their inhibitions are lost in the buzz of too much alcohol.

Go-Con! revolves around the story of three guys: Taichi (Ryuta Kawabata), Hiro (Ryoji Ando) and Kai (Kazuhito Furusaka), who spend their free hours scheming of ways to set a go-con for the weekend. ("Go-Con" is the shortened term of "godo conpa," which means a small party for people to meet and make new friends, aka, a hook up party). As you might suspect, they're in it for the conquest, and when these guys do battle, each uses their special "weapon" to get the girls: Hiro has youth, good looks, and charm; Kai, the former Olympic gold medallist, has the body of a Greek God; and the de facto leader, Taichi, emits pheromones that are so strong you can smell them. All manly attributes aside, the real secret weapon of swoon is a nerdy fourth member who provides the necessary ego boost when things go sour.

If you haven't guessed it already, the movie plays like a Japanese version of *Swingers*. For the first 60 of the film's 100 minutes, the testosterone-fueled trio

© Tsunku Town Films

JAPANESE SINGLES REVEAL THE SECRETS OF SWING

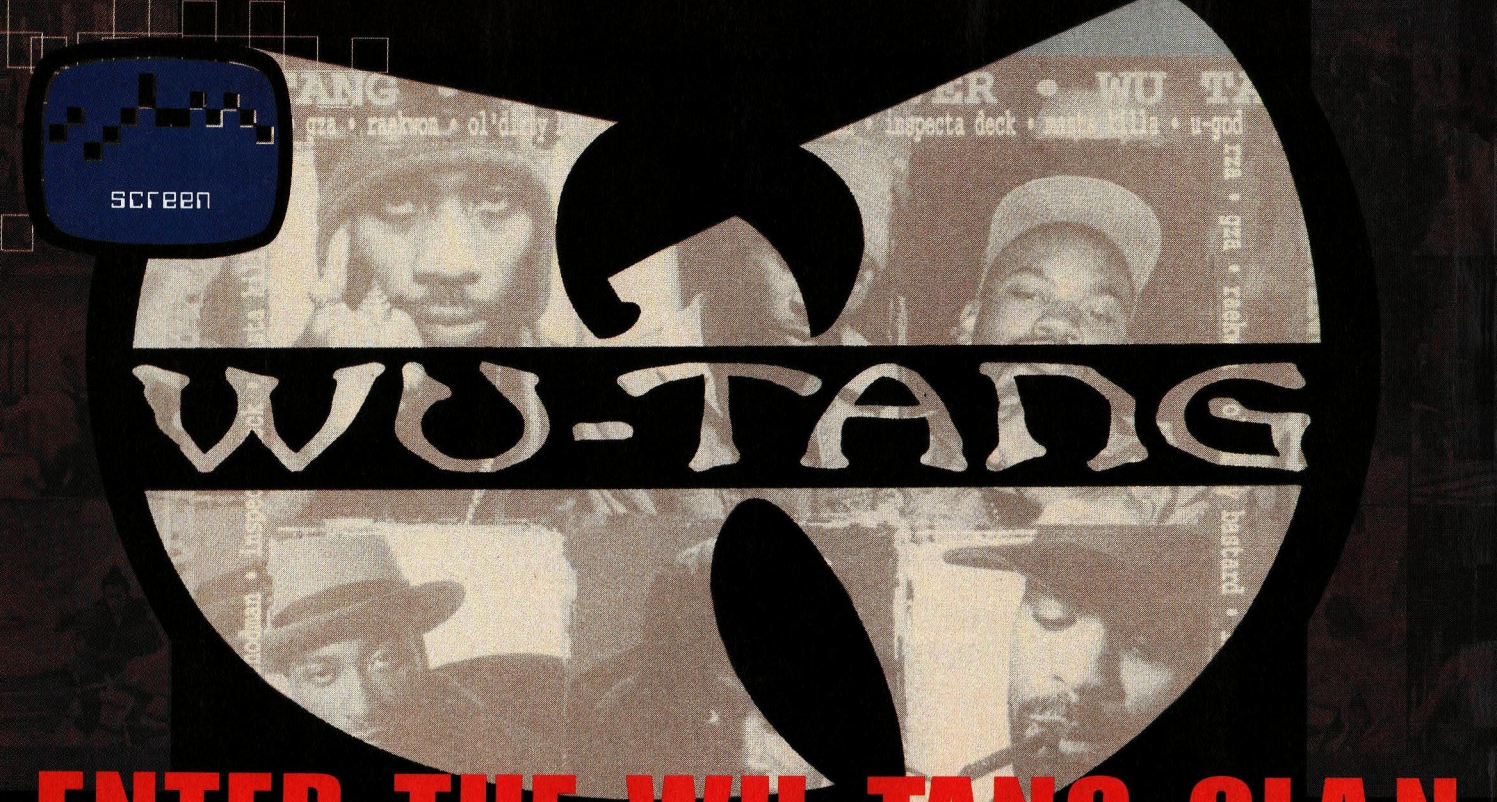
run through scores of (and usually score with) stewardesses, department store workers, hostesses, housewives . . . the list goes on. But then something happens. Unlike the smug swingers of *Swingers*, the boys in *Go-Con!* receive their come-uppance on Christmas Eve, when the shallowness of their ways is painfully brought to light . . .

J-Pop mega producer-turned director Tsunku (Morning Musume, T&C Bomber, Shalan Q) certainly knew what he was doing when he switched from music to movies. And with a budget of only $100,000, you'll be even more impressed by the final product.

Fluid camerawork and a jazzy score by SUPER TRAPP makes *Go-Con!* a swingingly good movie, even if some of the scenes are a bit overdone. If you get the chance, *Go-Con!* is definitely a go.

—Sheldon Dryzka

FLUID CAMERAWORK AND A JAZZY SCORE BY SUPER TRAPP MAKES *GO-CON!* A SWINGINGLY GOOD MOVIE (EVEN IF SOME OF THE SCENES ARE A BIT OVER-DONE). AT THE VERY LEAST, IT'S EVIDENCE THAT SCAMMING KNOWS NO BORDERS.



ENTER THE WU-TANG CLAN

THERE ARE 36 POINTS IN THE BODY, EACH AT A 10 DEGREE INTERVAL THAT, IF HIT WITH SHAOLIN SKILL, CAN KILL INSTANTLY.

In the early 80's, three family members on Staten Island would often watch kung fu films up on 42nd Street. The GZA (a.k.a. Justice, Maximillion or the Genius), The RZA (a.k.a. Prince Rakeem, the Rzarector, Bobby Steels, Ruler Zig-Zag-Zig Allah or the Abbot) and Ol' Dirty Bastard (a.k.a. Joe Bananas, Dirt McGirt, Osirus, Cyrus, Dirt Dog, Old Dirt Schultz, and Little Baby Jesus) recruited six other friends and family members to form the hardcore hip-hop group, The Wu-Tang Clan.

The Wu-Tang Clan believes in only three things: Honor, Loyalty and Brotherhood. Upon these three things, everything stands or falls.

With their 1993 release *Enter The Wu-Tang 36 Chambers*, Wu-Tang took the world by storm. You could love 'em or hate 'em, but no matter where you were, you definitely took notice of them. With Masta Killa, Ghostface Killah, Raekwon, U-God, Method Man and Inspectah Deck on board, they took over with the songs "Protect Ya Neck' and the strangely titled "Da Mystery of Chessboxin'."

Most hip-hop artists took their inspiration from Blaxploitation films, ghetto life and gangs, an influence that is present in the rhymes of the Wu-Tang Clan. But Wu-Tang took it to a new level with booming beats underscored by dialogue from Asian films and kung fu battle sounds. They often refer to Staten Island as Shaolin, the ancient birthplace of all kung fu.

SHAOLIN SHADOW BOXING AND THE WU-TANG SWORD STYLE: IF WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE, THE SHAOLIN AND THE WU-TANG COULD BE DANGEROUS! DO YOU THINK YOUR WU-TANG SWORD COULD DEFEAT ME? EN GARDE, I'LL LET YOU TRY MY WU-TANG STYLE! – *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*

According to the films, the Wu-Tang Clan were rebels against the Shaolin priests, who kept the secrets of their kung fu from commoners. The Wu-Tang decided to ignore the promptings of the Shaolin and taught their style to whomever was worthy of the challenge, ultimately teaming with the Manchurians to destroy Shaolin. Legend has it that the descendants of the Wu-Tang would one day rise up and rule the universe.

The kung fu films took the inner cities of the 70's by storm, as kids and adults flocked to decaying theaters to be enthralled by the training, loyalty, brotherhood, and kung-fu stylings on the screen. While most of these film prints

THE KUNG FU FLICK CONNECTION TO THE WU-TANG CLAN

are deteriorating in Hong Kong warehouses, recent videotape releases help to keep the genre alive.

In ancient China, the Shaolin monastery was the home for monks to study Buddhism and learn martial arts based on the movement found in nature. From ducks, cranes and eels to the five elements, they found plenty to master. As students advanced throught the chambers, they received a gold tooth as reward. Prior to the 36th chamber, a student would fight the Abbot—if successful, he'd enter the 36th chamber and finish his training with a set of gleaming gold teeth!

WU-TANG REPRESENTS THE SWORD STYLE OF VERBAL COMBAT IN WHICH A SHARP TONGUE IS ENOUGH TO CUT OFF THE HEADS OF ALL CHALLENGERS. THE CLAN STANDS FOR THE INDIVISIBLE FAMILY: YOU CHALLENGE ONE, YOU CHALLENGE ALL. – The RZA.

The Wu-Tang clan, led by the GZA with the production skills of the RZA, are out to own the hip-hop world. The members have many independent projects, including videos, a videogame, clothing lines (Wu-Wear) and several films. The RZA recently scored the Jim Jarmusch film, *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, an urban samurai/mafia film with a killer soundtrack that follows a ronin assassin that lives by the Hagakure in the midst of modern day New Jersey. People say that samurai have a knowledge that must be shared with all, although, I'm willing to bet that the stars and directors of the original films had absolutely no idea of the impact that they now have on today's hip-hop community. Must be a sign of the times. Enter the Wu-Tang zone, if you dare.

—Scott Reynolds

THE FILM HISTORY OF THE WU-TANG IS COVERED IN SUCH FILMS AS:

- *Enter The 36th Chamber of Shaolin aka Master Killer*
- *Return to the 36th Chamber aka Return of the Master Killer*
- *Shaolin Temple 2 aka Shaolin and Wu-Tang*
- *Iron Man from Shaolin*
- *Wu-Tang Clan*
- *Legend of the Liquid Sword*
- *Executioners from Shaolin*
- *5 Deadly Venoms*
- *5 Fingers of Death*
- *The Mystery of Chess Boxing*
- *Lord of the Wu-Tang*
- *Wu-Tang vs. Ninja*
- *The Warrior from Shaolin*
- *Shaolin Drunken Monk*
- *Lord of the Wu Tang*

GODZILLA 2000

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN AND RADIO

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PHOTOS: COURTESY OF COLUMBIA/

Godzilla fans rejoice . . . the king is NOT dead. That's right, "Gojira" the monster master is back from the dead and stomping to a theater near you for the first time since 1985. Yes, there was that horrendous reworking of our beloved green friend into a giant iguana in '98 but I don't think we can consider it a true legacy of Ishiro Honda's 1954 masterpiece. This time with Takao Okawara at the helm of this 23rd entry in the series you'll be treated to a film that pays homage to the original while giving it new life (literally), a leaner look and the technical marvels of CGI.

"I wanted to make something new," says Takao Okawara, "but Godzilla is a series with a long history. There are things you can change, but you have to keep to the traditions. Godzilla's height has changed through the years. From 1954 to 1975, the monster towered at 164 feet. From 1984 until 1989, he grew to 262 feet, then to 328 feet from 1991 through 1995." Feeling that Godzilla's distance from his human pray was too great, Okawara reduced his height to approximately 170 feet. At the same time, Okawara upgraded the visual effects technology by using almost 500 CGI shots.

A MONSTER SYNOPSIS

A dense fog covers the shoreline of Hokkaido creating a dreamlike, film noir atmosphere. Three figures are busy placing sensors that are supposed to detect when and where Godzilla will next attack. We come to find out that these people are Yuji Shinoda - leader of the Godzilla Prediction Network, his daughter Io and Yuki Ichinose, a science journalist.

That very evening as if rising from some primordial nightmare, a dark, monolithic form obscures the window of an isolated lighthouse. The creature reveals teeth like blades of steel, claws that could shear a man in half and shimmering dorsal fins. Once on land Godzilla demolishes the entire city of Nemuro. His eerie *rooaaARRR*! echoing through the night.

A few days before the attack, a 200 meter wide rock is discovered at the bottom of the Sea, not far off the coast of Kashima-nada.

IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT HE DIED IN HIS LAST FEATURE, THIS FILM BEGINS THE *KAIJU* CYCLE ALL OVER AGAIN WITH A MEANER, LEANER GODZILLA.

Shiro Miyasaka of the Crisis Control Intelligence Agency (not to be confused with the Godzilla Prediction Network), concluded that the rock is a 6000-year-old meteorite with strange chemical properties. While attempting to recover the meteorite, it mysteriously starts to move and soon, the rock is floating on the ocean's surface.

Meanwhile, Godzilla appears in Tokai Mura near another power plant (some motifs never go away!). A defense team armed with the anti-Godzilla "Full-Metal Missile" is sent to protect the plant from attack, but at that moment there is a report that the meteorite is flying towards Tokai Mura. Godzilla intercepts the flying rock, using his nuclear breath to melt the crust of the rock, revealing a UFO.

The UFO fires a hyper-blaster that blasts Godzilla far out to sea. With the green monster gone, the UFO flies towards Shinjuku, a key district of the Tokyo mega-tropolis. Luckily (I'm not sure how) Godzilla reappears, initiating the final showdown. During this pitched battle, the UFO transforms into a *kaiju* called Orga and we're treated to one of the best fights in the series history.

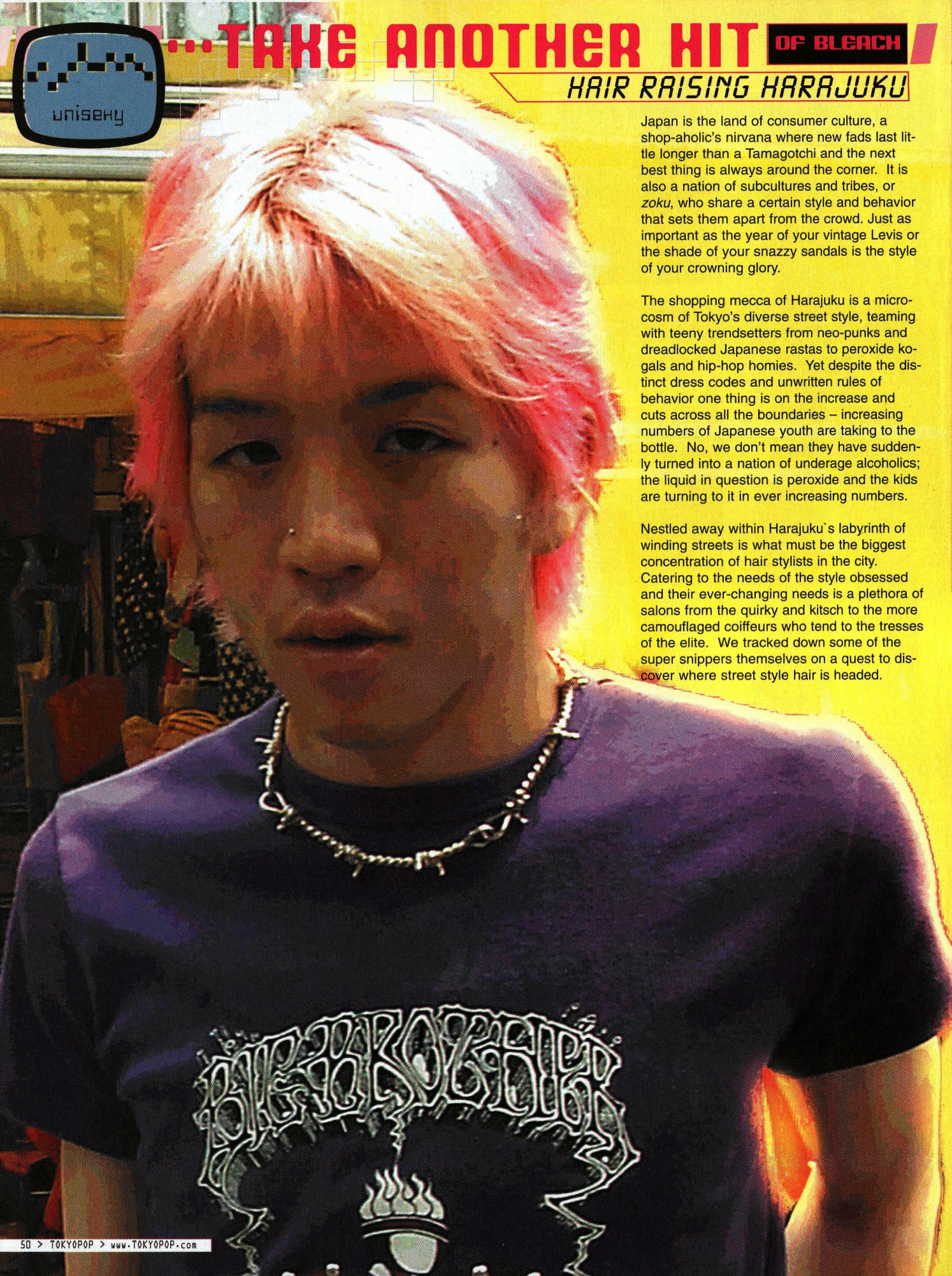
Featuring a great cast and well integrated models, live action and CGI effects that honor the great tradition of this series, Godzilla 2000 is a must see for fans of *kaiju* films. Besides, how often do we get to see a Japanese-lensed Godzilla movie on the big screen? This is a rare opportunity to marvel at the original lean, green fighting machine in a movie theater. Both G-fans and monster movie lovers in general are in for a real treat.

—Brian Puterman

unisexy

...TAKE ANOTHER HIT OF BLEACH

HAIR RAISING HARAJUKU



Japan is the land of consumer culture, a shop-aholic's nirvana where new fads last little longer than a Tamagotchi and the next best thing is always around the corner. It is also a nation of subcultures and tribes, or *zoku*, who share a certain style and behavior that sets them apart from the crowd. Just as important as the year of your vintage Levis or the shade of your snazzy sandals is the style of your crowning glory.

The shopping mecca of Harajuku is a microcosm of Tokyo's diverse street style, teaming with teeny trendsetters from neo-punks and dreadlocked Japanese rastas to peroxide kogals and hip-hop homies. Yet despite the distinct dress codes and unwritten rules of behavior one thing is on the increase and cuts across all the boundaries – increasing numbers of Japanese youth are taking to the bottle. No, we don't mean they have suddenly turned into a nation of underage alcoholics; the liquid in question is peroxide and the kids are turning to it in ever increasing numbers.

Nestled away within Harajuku`s labyrinth of winding streets is what must be the biggest concentration of hair stylists in the city. Catering to the needs of the style obsessed and their ever-changing needs is a plethora of salons from the quirky and kitsch to the more camouflaged coiffeurs who tend to the tresses of the elite. We tracked down some of the super snippers themselves on a quest to discover where street style hair is headed.

Aki Watanabe is a veteran of the business with 15 years experience in Tokyo, London, New York and Sydney. With a 50/50 mix of foreign and Japanese customers, Watanabe Salon caters to the needs of the fashion conscious from all walks of life. The cut of the minute is shaggy, according to Aki, inspired by the kicks and flicks sported by the runway models at last season's European fashion shows.

"Color is the biggest area of experimentation right now," says Aki. "The flow of information from overseas has become more readily available to the public so the tracking of trends has become easier. Our customers, particularly the younger ones are constantly experimenting and changing their style."

A little further off the beaten track is Sinden, one of Tokyo's few foreign owned salons where the international staff primps and preens using the latest techniques from across the globe. With close links to both the fashion and music industries, they are also responsible for creating the looks that their clients seek to imitate.

Co-owner Elissa Galbraich agrees that the biggest trend is color. "Bleach is big news as people are still following the look from overseas. It's only been over the past five to ten years that the demand for these products has grown so the quality has increased a great deal."

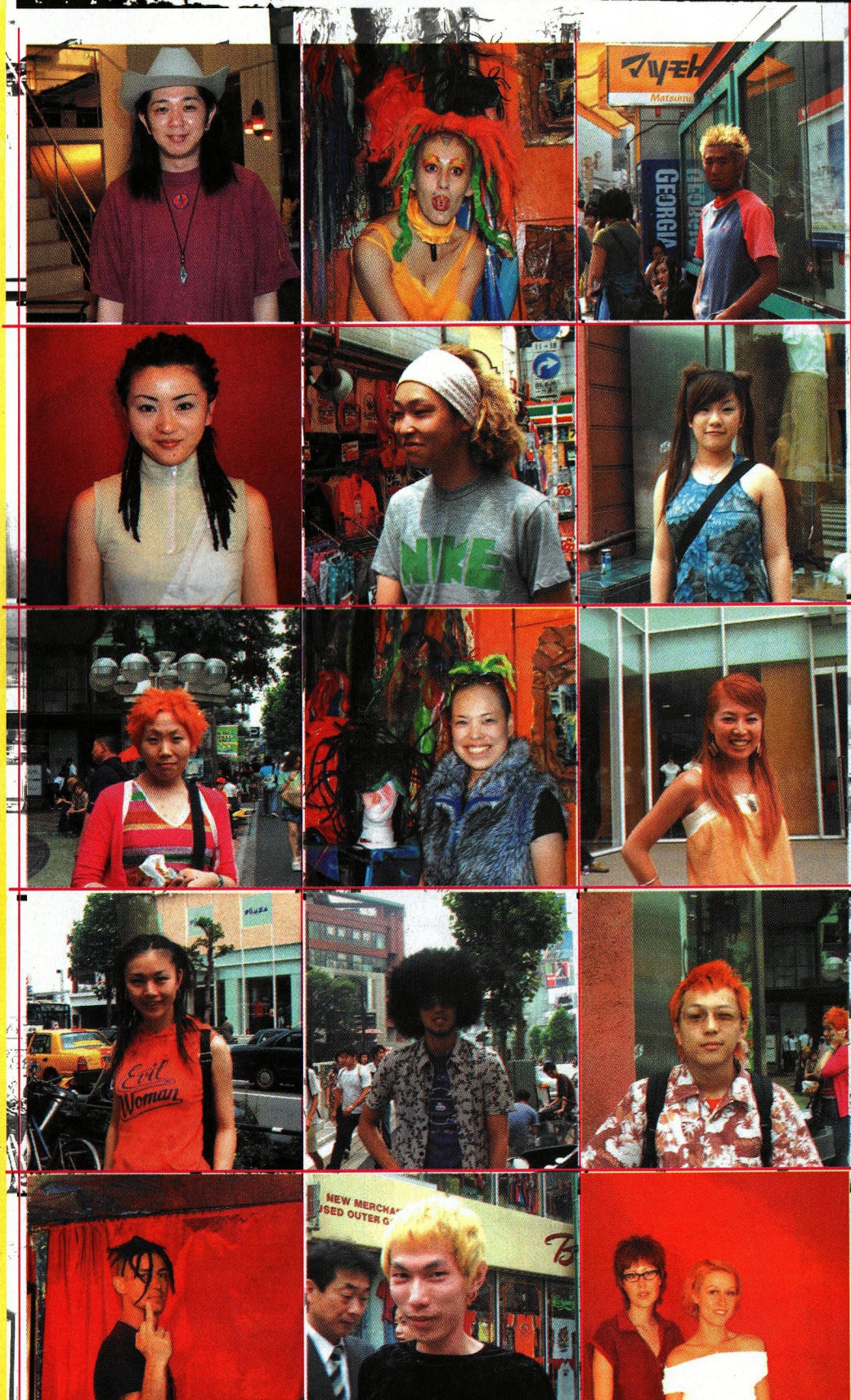
A big fan of Tokyo street style, Elissa, describes it as "Mind blowing. I never fail to be inspired every day." Sinden's Tokyo style tip for this season is the retro chic of 70's big, bouncy afros.

The final stop is Pepi's Tokyo where the influence seems to be further afield than just overseas. Not so much a hair salon as a fairy tale grotto with its magical, almost macabre decor of disembodied dolls' heads and mannequins, this place is certainly not for the faint hearted. The Spanish proprietor, Begonia Alegria, landed in Tokyo via a successful London salon that specialized in hair extensions of a distinctly alien nature. From behind a medusa like shock of green extensions she explains the secret of Pepi's success: "Everything about us is unique – our materials, the interior, the way we treat our clients."

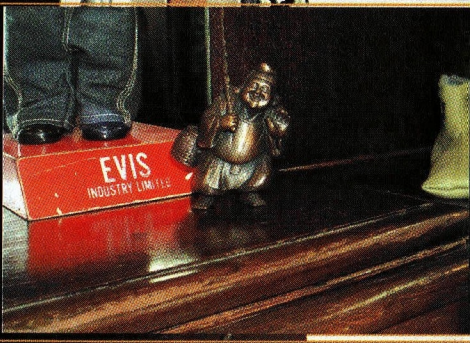
The young, mainly Japanese clientele sport multi-colored plastic and fiber extensions in spikes, twists and dreadlocks – the future of hair design today. Begonia predicts, "lots more dreadlocks" in the future, but you can be sure her version will have Bob Marley spinning in his grave!

—Esther Joyce

SHOPPING FOR NEW HAIRSTYLES? HERE ARE A FEW CHOICE DO'S...



PHOTOS: ESTHER JOYCE



pure "jean"ius

Evisu Jeans are the Japanese work wear label giving Levis a run for their money .....

From the golden arches of the McDonalds "M" to the go faster swoosh on their Nike trainers, the discerning, ad-literate consumer of today always demands "The Real Thing." And when it comes to the genuine article, the label and the logo are where it's at.

Although it may not yet have reached the iconic status of Coca-Cola or Levis, the Evisu Jeans' distinctively curved back pocket "E" is recognized all over Japan as being synonymous with high quality denim—AND it's coming to a store near you.

From humble beginnings in Osaka a decade ago, the empire of Hidehiko Yamane has grown from a tiny stock of just 300 pairs of jeans to encompass 17 stores across the country, not to mention the hundreds of outlets worldwide which carry the line.

An avid collector of all things denim, Yamane was inspired by the clean-cut image of the XX style Levis of the 50's and 60's, foregoing the early 90's shabby, slipshod attire of grunge for neat and tidy tailoring to come up with the inimitable Evisu look. He hasn't looked back since. "We always want to create something that we'd want to wear," explains Hiroko Mizoto, head of publicity at the label.

This philosophy led to the expansion of the company from the original men's and ladies' jeans and denim jackets to include the Evisu Tailor line and a range of golfing and fishing wear, two of Yamane's passions. Anglers with attitude can even pick up an Evisu fishing fly to dangle on the end of their rod!

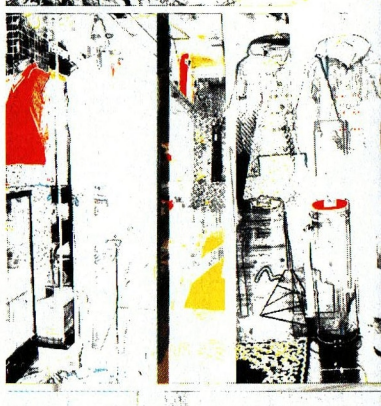
"Our customers range from young, trendy teenagers who love our colored jeans and jackets, to the 30 to 40 age bracket who have been buying Evisu since day one," says Hiroko.

The company's flagship Tokyo store is located between the chic, upmarket Daikan-yama district and funky Ebisu. But don't be confused by the sound-a-like name; the Evisu moniker dates back a few centuries to the seven gods traditionally revered in ancient Japan. The cheeky, chubby, big-eared chap otherwise known as Evisu was the God of Good Business and his legacy lives on in modern times where heavy earlobes have become a symbol of wealth and prosperity. The story behind the logo, however, is not quite so romantic. A perfect example of serendipity, Yamane came up with the hallmark curve after playing around with the paint-marked back pockets on a pair of 40's Levis and in simple join-the-dot fashion landed upon the logo that graces the backsides of the cool and stylish across the globe.

Plans for the future? "We want to keep expanding and open stores worldwide," explains Hiroko. "We already held a fashion show in London this year and plan to begin manufacturing in Italy in the near future." Good news for the fashion conscious everywhere who can't get enough of their affordable, well-made workwear.

For those who really want to splash out, try getting your hands on one of the 50 pairs of limited edition Millennium Mode pants made this year. But buyer beware! At $2,500 a pop, these diamond-encrusted denims are strictly for the heavily ear-lobed amongst you!

—Esther Joyce



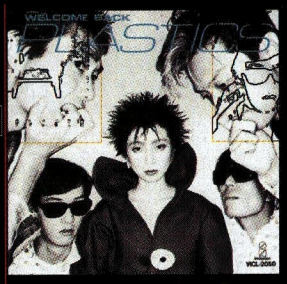
tracks

FEATURES

The Original Synths- 8 Essential Japanese Electronic Pop CDs.

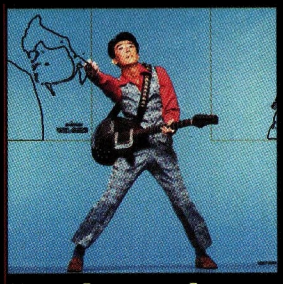
Yellow Magic Orchestra- Solo State Survivors (Alpha)

It's hard to pick just one YMO album, but this 1979 album contains such classics as Technopolis, Rydeen and Behind The Mask, making it indispensable.



Plastics-Welcome Back Plastics (Victor)

This disc presents the wildly quirky new wave techno-pop of the Plastics in all its glory. Features the original recording of "Good," which was covered by Pizzicato Five.

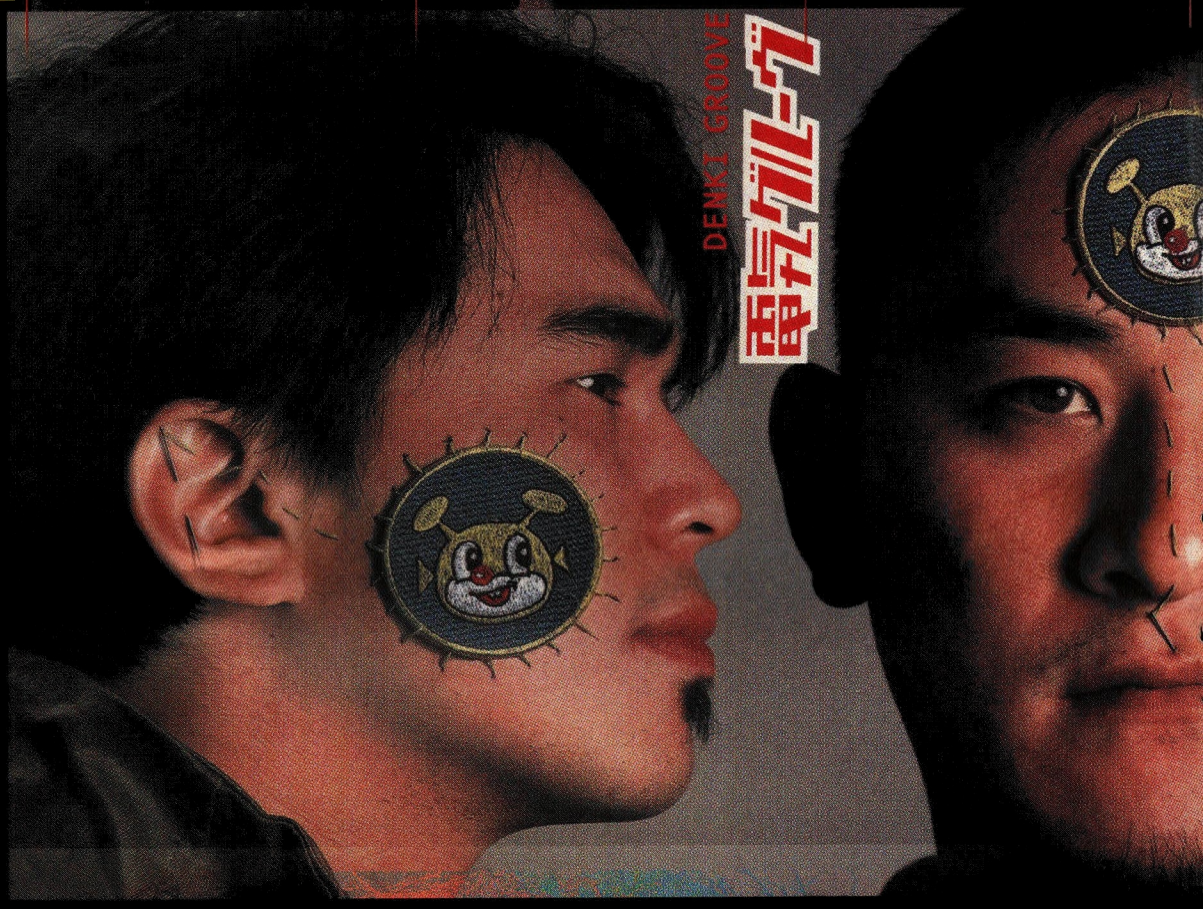


Hajime Tachibana-Bambi (Toshiba-EMI)

Tachibana, ex-guitar player for the Plastics, virtually invented the genre of electro-lounge on this classic disc, foreshadowing the likes of Fantastic Plastic Machine.

J-Synth

Electronic Pop Music In Japan



With the millennium upon us, electronic music has become an undeniable part of the musical fabric of the world. Be it in the form of trance, techno, drum 'n' bass, electro or whatever the sound of the moment might be called, music made with machines is everywhere. It's in the clubs, on television commercials, in movies, and on the radio. Acts such as Underworld, Prodigy, Moby, and Chemical Brothers have become the first "rock stars" of the electronic age, taking the sound up from the underground and out to the masses.

Electronica, as this overall genre of music has come to be known, is flourishing in Japan as well. World-class artists such as Denki Groove, Ken Ishii, Towa Tei, Boom Boom Satellites, and Yoshinori Sunahara have switched on the sound of Tokyo and are beaming their beats to an international audience hungry for new sounds. It's often the assumption that Japanese musical genres is based on imitation and derivation; however, a closer look reveals that Japanese musicians have been well ahead of the curve, with a history of synthesizer-based pop music reaching back nearly 25 years.

Nick Kent, a New York based authority on Japanese electronic music and creator of a comprehensive web site called Synth Music From Japan (http://artcontext.com/music/art-skool/jem/index.html), traces the use of the synthesizer in Japan back to 1973. "Composer Isao Tomita, who was best known for his orchestral soundtracks was still fascinated by the 1968 Walter Carlos album *Switched On Bach* of J. S. Bach music entirely performed on the synthesizer. In 1974 he released an album, *Snowflakes Are Dancing*, of all electronic arrangements of Debussy piano music," states Kent. Tomita's synthesized classical albums went on to become worldwide sensations.

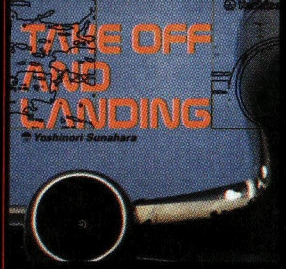
The next step in the evolution of J-synth music was to occur in the pop music world. Inspired by the icy yet melodic electronic pop music of German group Kraftwerk, Haruomi Hosono, Ryuichi Sakamoto, and Yukihiro Takahashi banded together to form Yellow Magic Orchestra (YMO). Each member was already well known in their own right, making YMO a sort of super-group. YMO laced Kraftwerk's electronics with a Beatle-esque melodic sensibility. Not only was YMO's sound embraced by the Japanese public, they were also the first J-pop group to win an international following.

While YMO was appealing to the masses, a more underground synth-based sound was developing, with acts such as the Plastics and P-Model combining the quirky techno-pop sounds of Devo and the B-52's with their own Japanese sensibilities. (The spirit of the Plastics is carried on today by such nouveaux new wave acts as the Spoozys, Motocompo, and Polysics.)

The 80's brought more innovations. For exam-

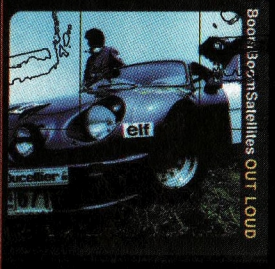
Yann Tomita-Music For Astro Age (Sony)

Combining synthesizers, steel drums, and field recordings, Tomita takes the listener on a playful, eclectic, and spacey musical journey on this wondrous 2 disc set.



Yoshinori Sunahara-Take Off And Landing (Ki/oon)

The ex-Denki Groove member creates a low key, lush, and melodic soundtrack to an imaginary underground Tokyo airport on this sublimely alluring disc.

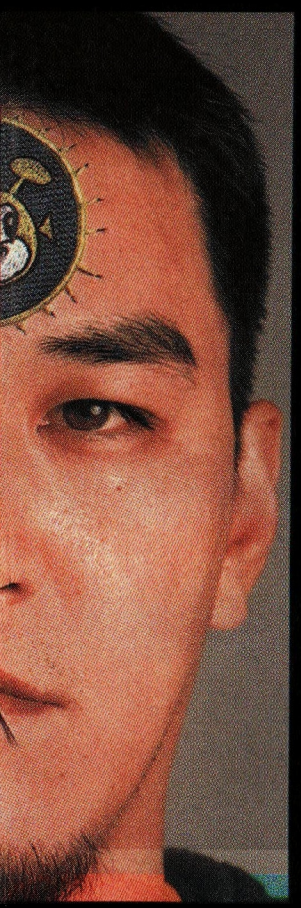


Boom Boom Satellites-Out Loud (Sony)

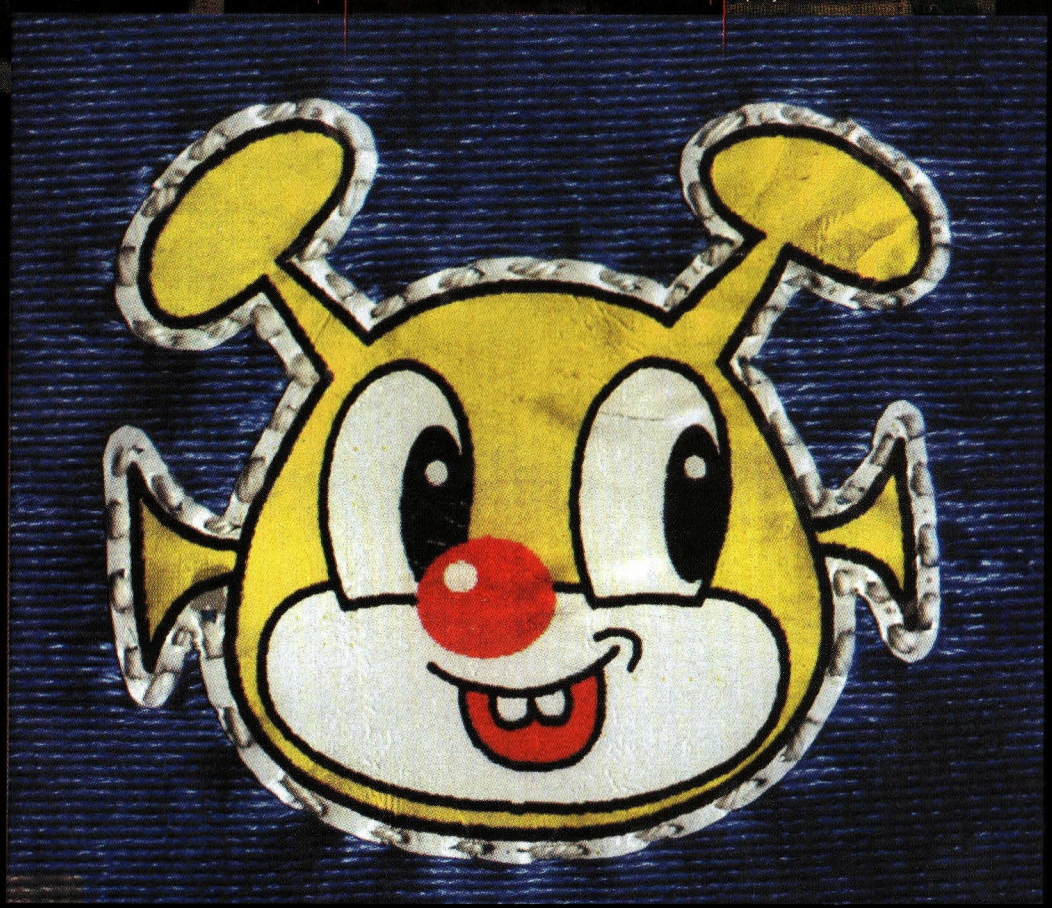
BBS add guitars and grit to their synthesizers, creating a compellingly textured epic.

Space Ponch-The World Shopping With Space Ponch (Transonic/Flavour)

Space Ponch takes us back to the old school with their wonderful blend of vintage synthesizers and playful beats.



Denki Groove-Voxxx
DG deliver an electronica tour de force on their most recent release.



ple, Ippu-Do made an international impression with their new wave art rock. Miharu Koshi released a wonderful series of operatically-tinged techno-pop records. Yann Tomita released a series of avant-garde electronic pop records, including his classic, *Music For Astro Age*. YMO's influence also continued after their breakup, still breaking ground with solo albums from all 3 members.

These artists laid the groundwork that left Japan well prepared for the electronica explosion of the 90's. As the European techno scene exploded in the 90's, Japanese musicians such as Ken Ishii and Denki Groove were staying ahead of the curve.
Ishii's driving techno/trance music was quickly embraced by the European audience, while Denki Groove turned electronica into a commercial and creative force in Japan.

Denki Groove has been leading the Japanese electronic scene for nearly a decade now. Their sound is wide ranging, bringing together hard-core, trance, house and electro and spicing it up with their unique humor and touches of traditional Japanese music.
DG leader, Takkyu Ishino, reflecting on their inspiration and rationale for starting the band, stated, "We were inspired by Kraftwerk and YMO, and we liked the sound of electronic instruments. We feel that they enhance the listener's freedom of imagination."

Denki Groove has taken an active role in bringing techno culture to the Japanese, but Ishino feels it's still in a state of infancy. "I've been sponsoring a rave called WIRE in Japan. I feel that it still is still in the development stage."
And who makes up the Denki Groove audience in Japan? "It's a wide range of people from teens to people in their twenties. The core audience, however, is the younger generation."

With Denki Groove's following expanding in Japan (where its most recent CD, *Voxxx*, was a top ten hit), the influence of the Japanese Electronica scene will undoubtedly be growing. Denki Groove has already been embraced in Europe, and is poised to take on the United States. Artists such as Ken Ishii and Yoshinori Sunahara (formerly of Denki Groove himself) have already established a worldwide audience. Electronica is a form of music largely unburdened by language barriers. That factor, combined with the new avenues provided by the global digital communication age, will soon be giving these artists the opportunity for the worldwide breakthrough they so richly deserve.

—David Ponak

BUY ONLINE

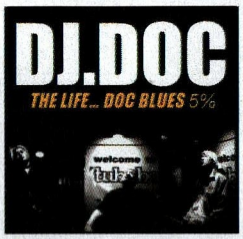
tracks

BUY ONLINE

BLATANT CD Reviews:

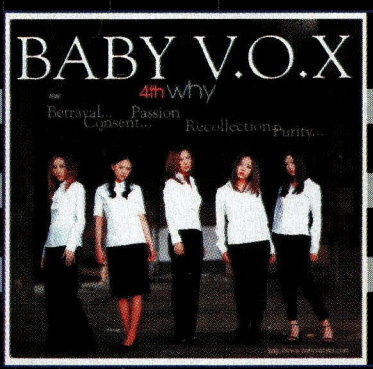
Artist:
ULTRAMANIAX RHYTHM
Title:
ULTRAMANIAX BEAT
Label:
KONAMI KMCS5/
KONAMI KMCS6

Watch out world! Ultraman's got two turntables and a microphone and he's ready to get down. In this remix-crazy world, it was inevitable that the DJs would get their hands on the soundtrack music to the classic TV series. The results are "mixed," but generally a lot of fun. Ultramaniax Rhythm features gangsta rap versions by the likes of MC KHA-LA with V.I.P. Crew and URU. (If you think it would be silly to hear would-be hardcore rappers rhyming about Ultraman kicking butt, you're right. It is.) *Ultramaniax Beat* is much more consistent, featuring all instrumental remixes ranging from house to trance to big beat. Unless you're a big fan of Ultraman and DJ culture these albums are funky but disposable. —David Ponak



Artist:
DJ DOC
Title:
THE LIFE...DOC BLUES 5%
Label:
DMR

DJ DOC is recognized as the first pop group in Korea to incorporate social commentary in their lyrics. On their latest album, the group disparages the "Pojori" (a derogatory slang term for the police) in familiar Gangsta Rap style. In an effort to appeal to a broader audience, DJ DOC experiments with several musical genres: from Hip Hop to Gayo (Korean "happy" dance music) to Indian (the sitar-esque backing on "Alsong Dalsong") to Soul ("Sexual Healing" samples on "Analog") to Nouveau Flamenco ("Amudo Morge") and Blues (the titular *DOC Blues*). All in all, a very interesting and enjoyable album to listen to and one which indicates further potential and longevity for DJ DOC in the Seoul pop scene. —Mark Shears



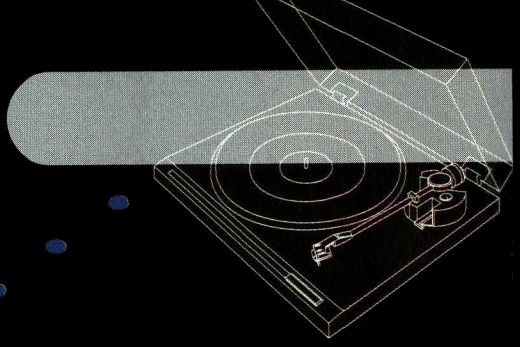
Artist:
BABY V.O.X.
Title:
4TH WHY
Label:
SYNNARA MUSIC

Firmly entrenched in the Korean Top Ten pop charts, Baby V.O.X. has proven to be an extremely popular band among Korean teens. The simple and trendy fashions worn by this five-girl group have spawned many Baby V.O.X. wannabes in discotheques and shopping malls across Seoul. Stand-out tracks on *4th Why* include a "hip-pop" (a more commercial form of hip-hop) number called "Overlap," a dance number entitled "Bad Boy" and a delightfully sweet ballad named "Before...sunrise." This album also doubles as a CD ROM – a feature that Korean techno-teens love. —Mark Shears

Artist:
COCCO
Title:
RAPUNZEL
Label:
SPEEDSTAR

Given her innocent appearance, Cocco's emotional intensity is startling. Unlike many pop idols whose less-than-stellar voices are rescued by slick production, the string-enhanced alternative sounds of *Rapunzel* ride shotgun to the power of Cocco's voice. And the singer/songwriter's lyrics (English translations provided in the liner notes!) are another outlet for her emotional expression, presenting universal themes such as love and beauty in intriguing and poetic phrasing.
—Katsutoshi Kawamata

OPINIONS

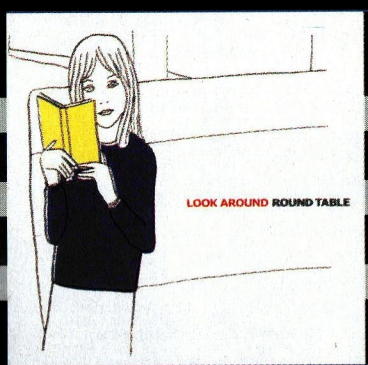


Artist:
MONDAY MICHIRU

Title:
NEW BEGINNINGS

Label:
POLYDOR POCH-1912

On her new EP, *New Beginnings*, Japanese soul diva Monday Michiru takes a decidedly Brazilian turn, delivering a short set of seductively dreamy dance tracks, reminiscent of Basia and Sade. The opening track, "Something To Believe In," has the most overt R&B sound, where "New Beginnings" and "Stop N' Listen" add more bossa nova to the mix. The EP is padded out with dub and instrumental versions of the same tracks, which also make for smooth listening. *New Beginnings* is full of the kind of mellow grooves that are more likely to make you want to sip your cocktail than shake your booty. —David Ponak

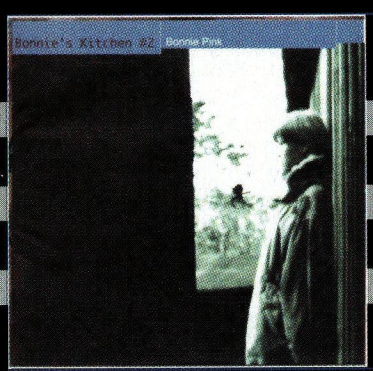


Artist:
ROUND TABLE

Title:
LOOK AROUND

Label:
MERCURY PHCL-5139

Round Table serves up the kind of frothy, featherweight retro-pop that's become a fixture on Japan's indie-pop scene. Inspired by the early 90's wimp rock pioneers such as Flippers Guitar (who spawned Kenji Ozawa and Cornelius) and Hideki Kaji (of Bridge), Round Table combines jangly folk rock guitars, breezy soul grooves, lounge music and Latin pop into a sound that is charmingly square. *Look Around* is a 16-track compilation drawn from a dizzying array of CDs (9 different releases in under 2 years!) by the ever-prolific group. The key to Round Table's charm may be their relative lack of irony. They even cover kitsch classic "It's A Sunshine Day" by the Brady Bunch with nary a wink. —David Ponak

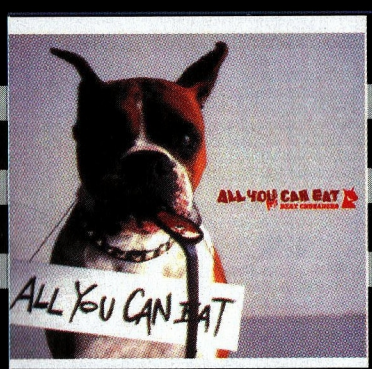


Artist:
BONNIE PINK

Title:
BONNIE'S KITCHEN #2

Label:
PONY CANYON

Bonnie's Kitchen #2 is the first compilation from singer/songwriter Bonnie Pink. Pink is a member of the new generation of Japanese female performers who are more than mere J-pop puppets. With the exception of a few cover versions, Pink writes all of her own music with a fresh melodic flair. The combination of Pink's infectious material with the crisp, retro production of Tore Johansson (the man behind the Cardigans' sound) is perfect. Pink's vibe is similar to such Western peers as Fiona Apple or Alanis Morissette, but her attitude is more casual. These 14 tracks show true diversity, with sounds ranging from jazz waltzes to ballads to rockers. —David Ponak



Artist:
BEAT CRUSADERS

Title:
ALL YOU CAN EAT

Label:
LASTRUM

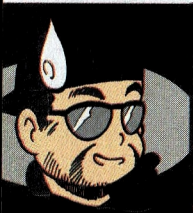
All the world's a stage for the Beat Crusaders, the Japanese "melo-core" (melodious hardcore music) band which sings in English. While their claim to have been most influenced by Weezer would seem to be in conflict with the melo-core label, it's clear by the middle of track one that the Beat Crusaders are more diverse than your average melo-core band. With harmonies reminiscent of the Beach Boys and the Bay City Rollers, the Beat Crusaders break down the borders between melo-core and pop. —Katsutoshi Kawamata

scorecard

WEB X REVIEW

Remember, these are OUR opinions of these websites. That means YOUR opinions can differ from OURS, because YOU'RE different from US. WE'RE all special in our own special way! If we can just accept our differences, why, all our problems, nay, all the world's problems would... Ahhh, no one reads this part anyway. If you don't like OUR opinions, then forget 'em.

CRITICAL CHARACTER CREW

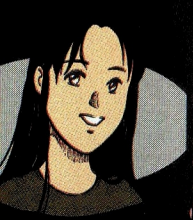


andy man

Like a samurai in search of sushi, Andrew arrives at the front door of TOKYOPOP every Friday looking for raw excitement and cheap anime thrills. He's currently trying to get a date with Cardcaptor Sakura.

christina

Another Sailor Scout in our midst? Christina (Gina's twin) could double as any one of the *Sailor* girls. Which one, we don't know. We already wonder if they're not switching personas in the office everyday. Get her autograph at 5670 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 400.



gina

Rei Hino to the rescue! If she looks and acts like the *Sailor Moon* hero, it's 'cause she IS Rei Hino. Or, is she? If this popular teen-girl anime goes live-action movie, don't be surprised if you find her in line at the auditions.

wes

Wes needs to be cloned. He's the ideal, squeaky-clean guy that would make any Asian parent proud. You can find him lending a helping hand to anyone in need. We're all very impressed. More jealous, though.

HEAVY

heavy.com

graphics: **FLASHY**

content: **ANIME CLIPS**

wired: **DRUNKEN TIGER MUSIC VIDEO**

tired: **IT'S ALL GOOD**

speed: **LIKE A FAT SUMO**

link: **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**

The site is set up very well, but I found the FLASH movies gross in humor and not very amusing. I was really insulted. They made fun of the Smashing Pumpkins, and I think they are an exceptional band. What's up with the show Bondage Bunnies? That was just really freakin' nasty. I don't know what these people are smoking, but I don't want any. You don't want any either. I'm sure Wes found it amusing, though.

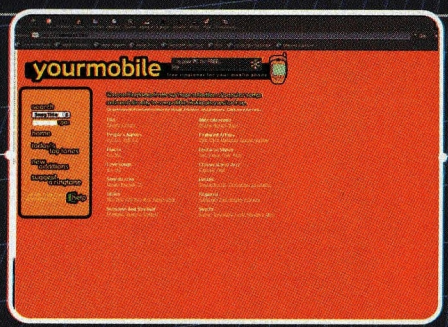
This site must have the longest loading time in history. I thought that I was going to turn 80 before it finished loading. Anyhow, the site has nice flash effects and animations on pop culture stuff. Other than that, I was extremely confused and frustrated by it's lack of organization.

Tired of the usual "scroll and read info or look at pictures" websites? You gotta check this out if you dig cutting edge flash technology. As for the content, what can I say? Put some angry, rebellious, web savvy people together and sha-bam! – you come out with something "heavy!"

Well... This was kind of a slap in the face. Despite my ultra-super-squeaky clean image, I'm prone to some crudeness once in a while. But this makes South Park look like Scooby Doo. Of course, the flash animation is second to none, and dammit, the site makes me laugh. So I bookmarked it for my late night viewing pleasure.

YOUR MOBILE

yourmobile.com



graphics: **MELLO YELLOW**

content: **PHONE TUNES**

wired: **DIVERSE RANGE OF MELODIES**

tired: **THE THONG SONG**

speed: **QUICKER THAN A NOKIA 6190**

link: **NONE**

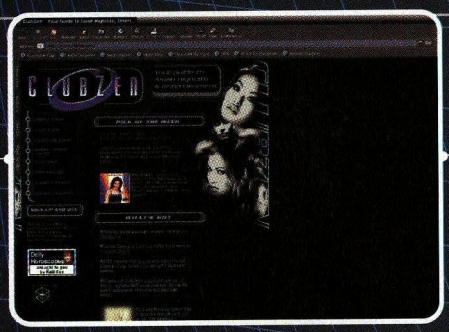
For all you cell phone freaks, this is ring tone heaven! They've got a ton of melodies, from the Thong Song to the James Bond soundtrack. Type in your cell number and the site instantly sends you the song – FREE!

I don't have a cell phone, so for all practical purposes, I could care less about a million different ringing options. But since Andy is so into his new Nokia, it figures that he'd really dig this site. Like I said, if you don't have a cell phone, don't waste your time here.

I'd have to agree with Gina. It's a cool site – only to get phone info. Other than that, there is nothing else to keep you interested. If I did have a phone (hint hint: my birthday is next month), I'd be sending myself all kinds of stuff.

All right! Now I can finally live out my Darth Vader fantasy. I just got the Star Wars Imperial March theme put on my phone and, if I walk around campus with it playing, I'll be like Vader himself! Ugh, yeah. I'm not THAT big of a loser!!!

CLUBZEN
clubzen.com



graphics: DARK AND CLUBBY
content: CLUB DIRECTORY

wired: ASIAN TALENT STUFF
tired: LIMITED INFO
speed: LIKE A GO-GO DANCER
link: I WISH THERE WERE

If you're a mainstream Asian, this site may be for you. There's info on clubs and modeling opportunities. (I might finally get my big break!) Little content and material, but it has promise... The best feature here is its resources – for example, they've got really cool pictures of the Aspire '99 Awards. This is definitely a site to keep your eye on for a couple years (if it lasts that long).

It's party central at clubzen.com! It's just what we need, a web site that tells you where all the action is! Parties and clubs are listed nationwide along with other interesting features. Aspiring Asian models and actors/actresses should check out the club zen talent zone!

7.0

If you're Asian and/or like to chill with Asian people, you should give this site a looksie. This is the perfect place to go to if you're in search for Asian clubs and parties near you. My only complaint here is that things here get boring fast so there's not much to come back for.

7.0

I'm very disappointed. I mean, come on...a club directory website with no picture of hoochies??? Get real. Somehow, this site gets away with it, those bastards. But hey...it also has info to help me along to my lifetime dream of becoming a runway model! I'm pretty sure I'll meet the height requirement...Clubbing is not really my scene though, so this site's not for me.

4.0

NETBABYWORLD
netbabyworld.com

graphics: FUTURAMA
content: GAMES GALORE

wired: NETWORK GAMING FEATURE
tired: LONG LOADING TIMES
speed: LIKE THE NINJA GIRL
link: DO I HAVE TO LEAVE

I'm sure Wes played on this site for hours. It's got these cool Nintendo-style Shockwave games... Makes me nostalgic about the late 80's when Nintendo was popular. If you want to kill time, or procrastinate from studying, this is the place to go. There are games like Track & Field, and Digdug. Not much else, but it was fun for about an hour.

8.0

It's games galore! Create your own characters and log in to play fun and cute mini-games. There is a neat feature where you can join up in a team with other people to get high scores. The only thing that bothers me is the netbaby alien mascot. Really scary.

8.7

Cute games and equally cute graphics make any casual web surfer want to visit more than once. The site requires you to download shockwave multimedia, so be prepared for some loading times. As for the games...way overpriced. I'd get them only if I cashed in my computer stock!

8.0

Eh...some of the games are mildly fun, if unhealthy for your keyboard. Not a lot here... some of the graphics are pretty slick? I dunno, I'm kinda reaching here. If you have a couple minutes, go check it, then get bored of it.

4.0

SUPERMAN
superman.com

graphics: PLAIN AND SIMPLE
content: NEWS

wired: CHARACTER PROFILES
tired: NO INTERACTIVITY
speed: FASTER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET
link: WEAK

I think the site is okay. It tells you when comics come out and stuff like that. What it doesn't do is offer cool interactive stuff for Superman or Batman, stuff like "Pin the Hood on the Caped Crusader." DC may know comics, but they sure don't know the Internet. You can check out their links to other cool websites though.

6.0

I was quite disappointed with DC's site. There are nice animations and downloads, but overall, I was bored to death. I would like to see more graphics and features to keep me coming back. The only redeeming thing here were the Superman character profiles.

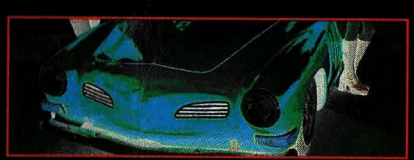
4.0

What the...? I'm expecting some super cool Superman site but all I get is the DC Comics main page. At any rate, I'm disappointed that Superman doesn't even get his own site and that the DC Comics site is so ancient looking. I'd say only hard core DC fans should visit this place since the only interesting sections would be the news bits and DC character profiles.

Yahoo. I used to be into comic books, but mostly the Marvel variety. I've never been a huge fan of much of their work, and I think the old Superman sucks mightily, and with much vigor. But for the avid DC comic fan, this is a great way to stay on top of everything and order some back issues. The site's pretty ugly too.

DRIVER FOUND

It's a bird, it's a plane . . . It's a Karmann Ghia!



Which one of these doesn't belong: Acura Integra, Honda Civic, Mitsubishi Eclipse, or a VW Karmann Ghia?

Although you don't have to be a car enthusiast to get this one right, Jason "Kid" Flores might make you change your mind. Doing his part to bring diversity to a Hondarian world, Flores has resurrected the ancient Karmann Ghia from the scrap heap (literally), and is showing everyone that Import models aren't all Japanese.

A LITTLE KARMANN GHISTORY

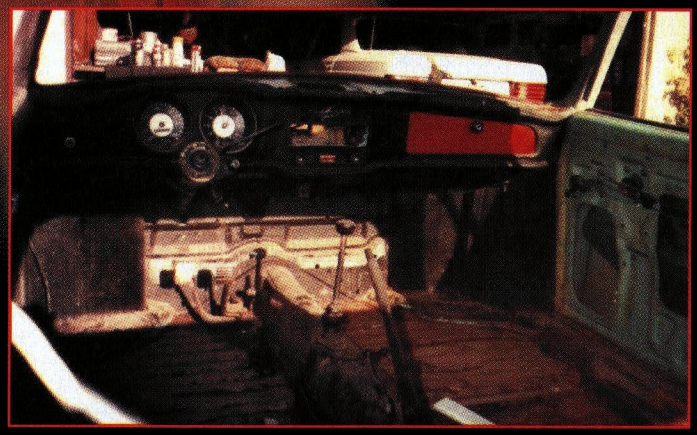
In the early 1950's, several years after WWII, the automotive market looked ready for a shift from practical to flashy. Around this time, several car companies had plans to introduce an "image" car to the public, among them, Volkswagen and Chrysler. Chrysler contracted with the Italian styling and coach building firm of Ghia to build a series of "dream" cars. Among the pile of trashed concepts lay what would later become the Volkswagen Karmann Ghia.

While Chrysler worked with Ghia, Volkswagen contracted with the German coachbuilder, Karmann to create their "image" car. Karmann, in need of a design, approached Ghia, who modified the old Chrysler design to fit the Beetle floor plan. The VW executives liked what they saw and by August of 1955, the first Volkswagen Karmann Ghias rolled off the assembly line in Osnabruck, Germany as 1956 models.

The Karmann Ghia's beautiful styling but mediocre performance resulted in fair sales of over 10,000 the first year. When the convertible came out in 1958, sales jumped to around 18,000 cars per year, climbing steadily until the late 1960's when they peaked at 33,000 cars a year.

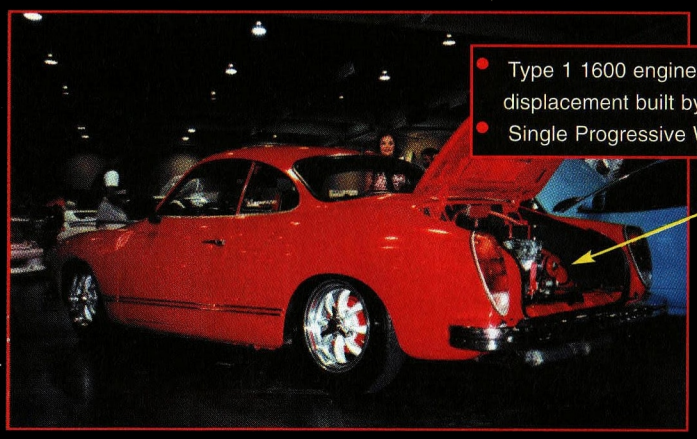
To make way for the new VW Scirocco, Volkswagen canned the Karmann Ghia in 1974. Most of the 365,912 coupes and 79,326 convertibles that were produced are resting peacefully in VW heaven.

powered by www.GoldenSilk.com

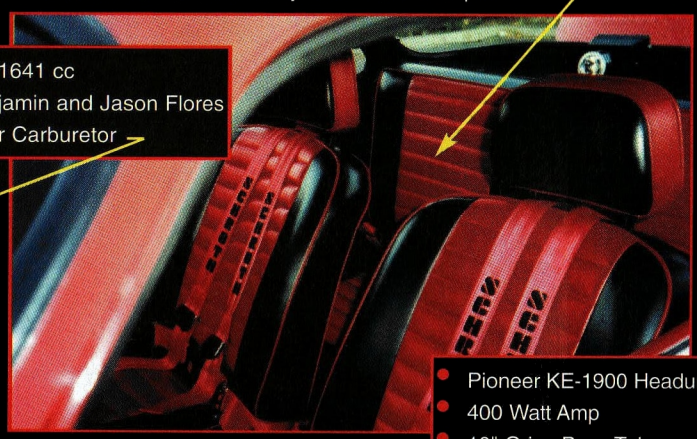


- "Porsche Red" by PJ Bonafacio in Walnut, CA
- KYB Gas-Adjust Lowered Shocks(Front)
- Gabriel Adjustable Air Shocks(Rear)

- Empi style 8 spoke aluminum rims with three spoke knockoff
- Custom red and black vinyl seats and door panel.

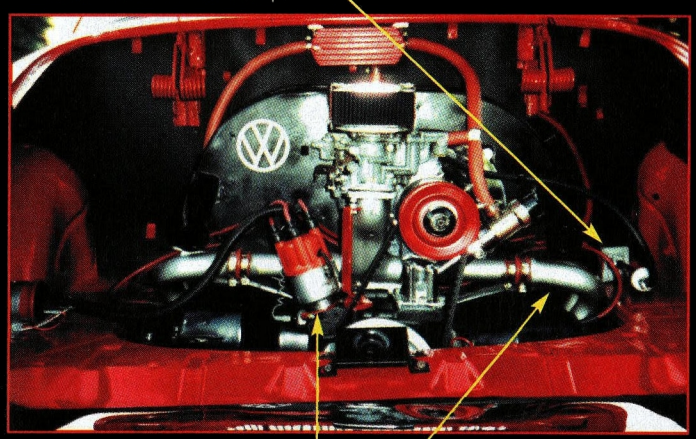


- Type 1 1600 engine with 1641 cc displacement built by Benjamin and Jason Flores
- Single Progressive Weber Carburetor

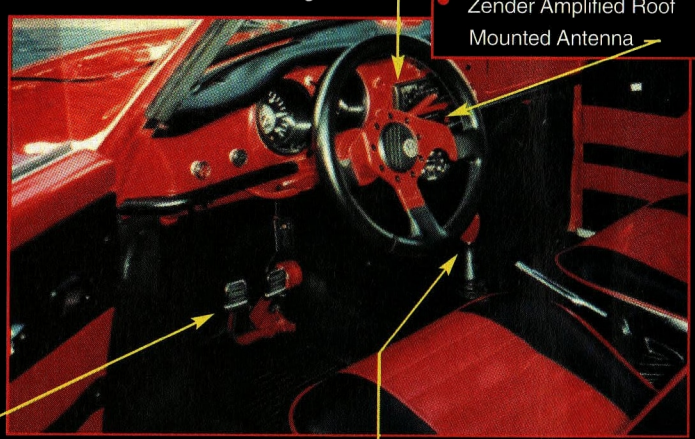


- Pioneer KE-1900 Headunit
- 400 Watt Amp
- 10" Orion Bass Tube
- Zender Amplified Roof Mounted Antenna

- Facet Electric Fuel Pump



- Formula France 12" steering wheel



- BOSCH 009 Distributor
- Dual Port Aluminum Manifold
- Quick shift short throw shifter
- Custom chrome pedals & roller gas pedal

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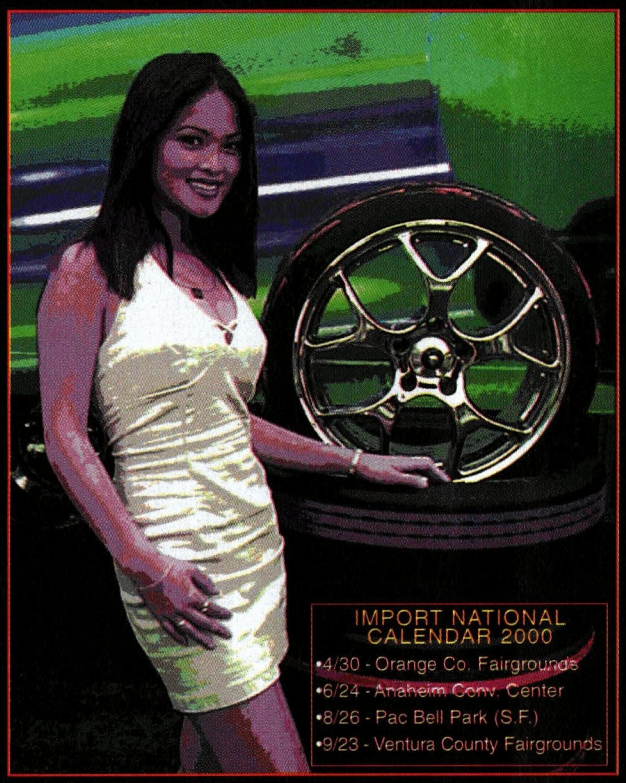
import cars

A NEW SHOW ON THE BLOCK

Inside Import Nationals

For the second time ever, Import Nationals has come to Southern California for another car show extravaganza. With the growth of the import car scene, Import Nationals offer more show opportunities for hardcore competitors. This year they're invading California with 4 shows backed by their major sponsor, BF Goodrich.

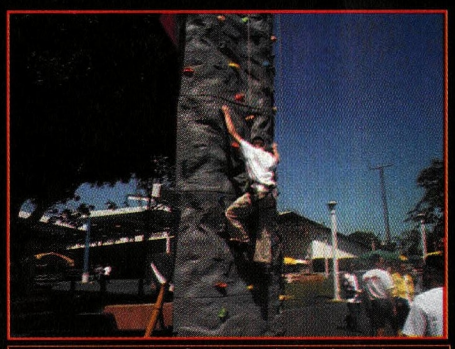
powered by www.GoldenSilk.com



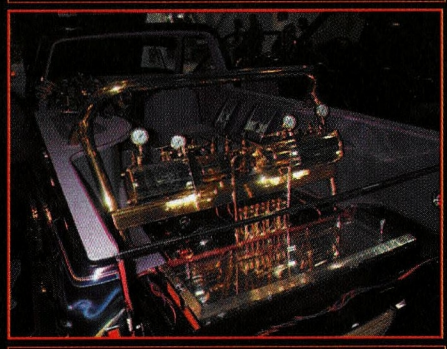
SHOTS FROM THE APRIL SHOW IN ORANGE COUNTY

For the civic-minded person

Can you hear me?


Look at the Stud . . . oh, that's me!

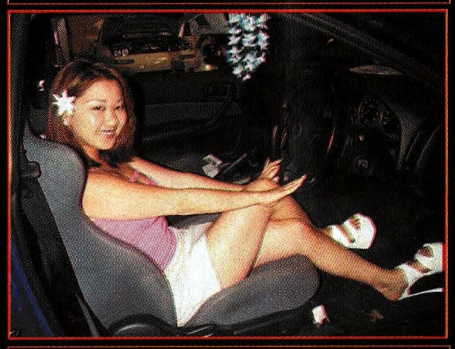
Felix flossing his wild 200 SX


Lowriders invading the Import Scene?

Victor's Prelude is stacked under his hood

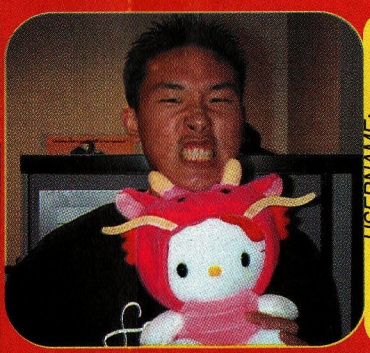
A showstopping Accord wagon

Johnny's Turbo Civic Si never gets lost


Kristen's cross-legged clutch method

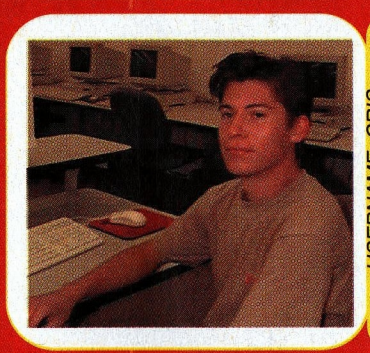
WHO'S IN THE TOKYOPOP NEIGHBORHOOD?

FEATURE MEMBERS



USERNAME: SONNYCHEEBA

USERNAME: COSMICGIRL



USERNAME: CRIS

USERNAME: JMK1004

USERNAME: SONNYCHEEBA

If you could have one super power, what would it be?
Obviously super telepathic powers. So if I get pissed off at someone, I can shut his/her mind off. Human vegetable baby.

Best or worst dating experience?
One time I got so bored with my date at Curry House, I rang up the bill and stuffed myself so I didn't have to talk. Before dessert, I excused myself to use the restroom and hightailed it out of there. Good thing I met her at the restaurant, otherwise I might've had to take her home. I felt bad afterwards and mailed her a check. She never cashed it. Ha ha! Sucker.

Your favorite hobbies?
Playing basketball and tennis. Painting and drawing.

If you could date a superhero, who'd it be?
The X-men villain, Mystique. She's a baaaad girl. Plus, she can shape-shift, so she can be anyone I want.

What would you most likely get arrested for?
Assault from road rage. It takes me almost an hour in California traffic to get to work everyday. Sometimes, the baseball bat in my trunk calls out to me. Plus, Asian people are crazy drivers. Driving in Monterey Park alone warrants a baseball bat to a windshield.

USERNAME: COSMICGIRL

What would you most likely get arrested for?
I'll most likely be arrested for speeding. I drive like a madwoman on the freeway.

If you could have one super power, what would it be?
I know for sure that I would NOT be too jazzed about reading people's minds. Knowing what people think and scrutinizing every aspect of me would literally make me so uncomfortable. But I do know for a fact that I would love to freeze time whenever I want to.

What would you most likely get arrested for?
I'd date Tuxedo Mask from Sailor Moon. He is simply adorable.

Best or worst dating experience?
I give props to a guy who takes his date on a little hiking adventure. My friend and I went hiking at this incredible place, and the entire night we just looked at the stars and talked about almost everything. Worst experience: Three years ago, I went on a blind date with this idiotic guy. Seriously, his brain was the size of a pea, comparable to a caveman. We hardly uttered four sentences to one another.

Your favorite hobbies?
During my spare time, I write poetry. I've been writing poetry ever since I was in fifth grade. I can describe it as my own personal punching bag. It is such a great stress releaser. Another hobby of mine is watching a film and analyzing the characters on paper. Dissecting and understanding the character's perspectives and insights always captivates me. It's interesting to see how differently and similarly they perceive things.

USERNAME: CRIS

How would things be different if women ruled the world?
All of Asia, Europe, Africa, South America . . . They'd all be great places to live because women wouldn't cause wars to divide them.

Do you have any tattoos or piercings and what is the story behind them?
Only the dozens of painful scars and piercings caused by past loves and losses . . . otherwise, none.

What would you never give up for the opposite sex?
I'm real picky about my hair. I change it for NO woman!

What would you most likely be arrested for?
My driving; it could kill somebody! Just who do you think the REAL bad drivers out there are . . .

What is the most romantic song of all time?
When you have the right girl at the right place with "Unchained Melody" playing, it can feel like magic.

USERNAME: JMK1004

What's your favorite thing to do on a Friday night?
My favorite thing to do on a Friday night is recover from partying all night the previous day! Who says you gotta wait until Friday to start your weekend!

Do you have any tattoos or piercings and what is the story behind them?
I've got three holes in each ear, no biggie. I want a tattoo but my husband refuses; not because of what I want tattooed, but perhaps where I want it. But hey, what's his worry, no ordinary Joe could see it there!

What would you never give up for the opposite sex?
My headstrong stubbornness that has served as both determination and a safety net for me at all times. I have very strong opinions on human and animal rights, my Buddhist beliefs, poetry, and my goals for the future. No one, even if they tried, could snatch that from me.

What would you most likely be arrested for?
Probably protesting. I participate in a lot of demonstrations/protests against sweatshop labor, cruelty to animals, etc. I can definitely see myself being pulled away from a rally against unnecessary lab testing on animals.

What is the most romantic song of all time?
Even though I'm a total alternative freak, I gotta give it to Celine Dion's "I Remember L.A." Perhaps I'm biased because the song seems to tell a story about a chunk of my life, or maybe it's just the actual content of the lyrics. Whatever it is, it makes me teary each time I hear it.

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TOKYOPOP PEOPLE

PICASSO WAS A CLOSET OTAKU

PHAN ART

Attention all artistic and creative people!

Send in your own drawings, graphic designs, poems, etc. If you have the skills, your work will be published right here. This section was established to showcase your creative talents so bust out that pen, pencil, or keyboard and get going!

1 ■ Blanca Flores
2 ■ Chetwah
3 ■ Josh Marin, Westminster, CO, 17yrs.
4 ■ Jillian O

Please send all submissions to:
TOKYOPOP People
5670 Wilshire Blvd. 4th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90036
Or email to editor@TOKYOPOP.com

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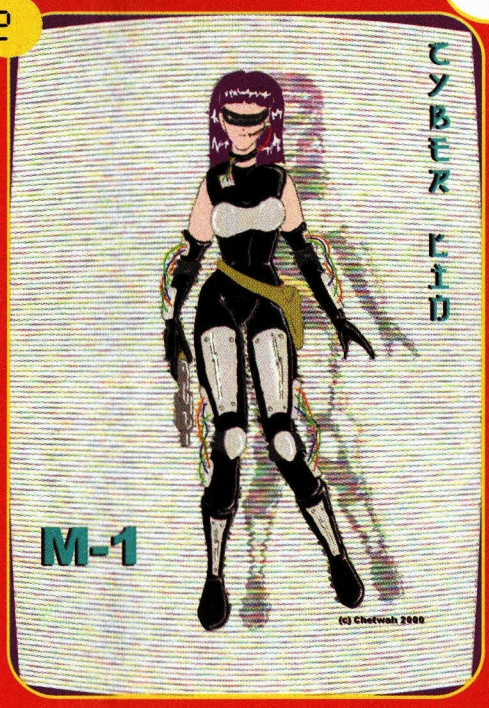


4

NASTY AND STINKY—GIVIN' THE PEOPLE

NASTY THOUGHTS

ASIAN HIP-HOP HAS NO SOUL

As part of TOKYOPOP's involvement in the government's new "Intellectual Development of the Incredibly Obtuse and Thick-headed" program (aka. I.D.I.O.T.), we have hired the program's two poster children, Nasty and Stinky to run this new section, "Nasty Thoughts". From the foggy stupor that constitutes their so-called "minds", they will address the issues that (1) are important to them and, (2) they can remember. We encourage you all to aid their development by adding your own rebuttals to these pages. To participate, please email them your nasty thoughts to nasty@usa.tokyopop.com. Thank you and God Bless.

NASTY . . . . . .

Wusssaaaaaap! I got one word for you: Motown. Where is it? The good ole' U.S.A. Not Tokyo, not Beijing, not even Seoul. Asian people should stick to what they do best: kung fu, bad movies, and rice rocket cars -- when it comes to music, step off. The last time I saw an Asian hip-hop video, it was a bunch of Japanese people with fake dreadlocks, braids and baggy pants, hopping around like extras from a Janet Jackson video . . . Why they gotta front? You ain't black, so stop trying to act Black. Whatever race you are, you have to create your own thing, not COPY it from someone else. Asians didn't start hip-hop, so they shouldn't try to make it, cause whatever they end up doing sounds like a whack remake of *Boys 2 Men*. And the Asian version is so cutesy that it has about as much soul as Sanrio. If you want to get down with Hello Kitty and Little Twin Star, then go ahead and get that SES CD, if not, stay true to the Tribe, and shake your booty to some REAL soul.

STINKY . . . . . .

Oooh, listen to you, Mr. Cosmopolitan music critic. "Asian hip-hop has no soul." I got TWO words for you, Puff Daddy: Vanilla Ice. Ice Ice Baby. Now there was some white bread that didn't need no butter. You gotta challenge your old school thinking, man. You sound like my grandma, "Those Asians aren't creative, but they're good at copying things." Wake up, dude. This is the country that brought you Hello Kitty! Soul is what you feel and Japan, for one, wouldn't be exporting DJs like Toyotas if their music wasn't touching people. Open your nasty mind and feel the soul, baby.

. . . . . STINKY and NASTY

USERNAME: JOSEPHINE

I believe that people who grow up listening to a certain type of music or in a certain environment can adapt and grow into that culture. Therefore, I do believe Asian hip-hop music does have soul and for some Asian American groups you couldn't tell they were Asian by just listening to them. However, does that impress me? Not really! An artist is truly impressive when s/he develops a distinct sound away from conventional Hip-Hop.

USERNAME: STYLESMCCOMB

Hell yeah! Asian hip-hop has soul! Anyone who questions that needs to listen to some Soul Scream, out of Japan, or check out the Asian hip-hop scene in San Francisco, word to my peeps in S.F. What gives Asian hip-hop its soul is the fact that it has yet to be manipulated and distorted like so much of the crap we're forced to listen to these days; it carries the beat of the culture it represents, and you sure as hell feel the groove. It's untouched and it's raw, and baby we like it RAAAAAAWWWWW!

USERNAME: VBALLER

Asian and soul seem to be mutually exclusive. The same holds true for Asian and hip-hop. From what I've heard, Asian artists sound very technical/artificial when attempting to perform in this genre. Their phrasing and timing is so calculated that it doesn't groove. It's kind of like trying to learn how to dance from an instructional manual. If you don't groove, you'll be consciously counting the beat in your head, and moving your feet robotically. I see the same in the Asian Hip-Hop scene, and it's the lyrics that come out robotic.

USERNAME: BABYBEAR

Asians don't really have soul. I hate to say it. But every time they try to make an album that sells, it just comes out cheesy and way too contrived. In fact, it's almost as if they're trying too hard for what should just come naturally. Why else do super groups like Boyz II Men sell so well? They're doing what comes naturally.

USERNAME: MIXMASTER

You know . . . I just think it's different. Take for instance: hip-hop has to do with drums. Even from the Japanese Culture, they use the drums. They use Taiko drums. So, automatically, their drum patterns are gonna be different. You know. So I just take it as an automatic thing.

USERNAME: HIPHOPPA

Bull s**t. I think it has a different kind of vibe . . . more subtle. It's got a blend of a bunch of different styles.

A DJ KRUSH FAN (at the El Rey, 6/2000)

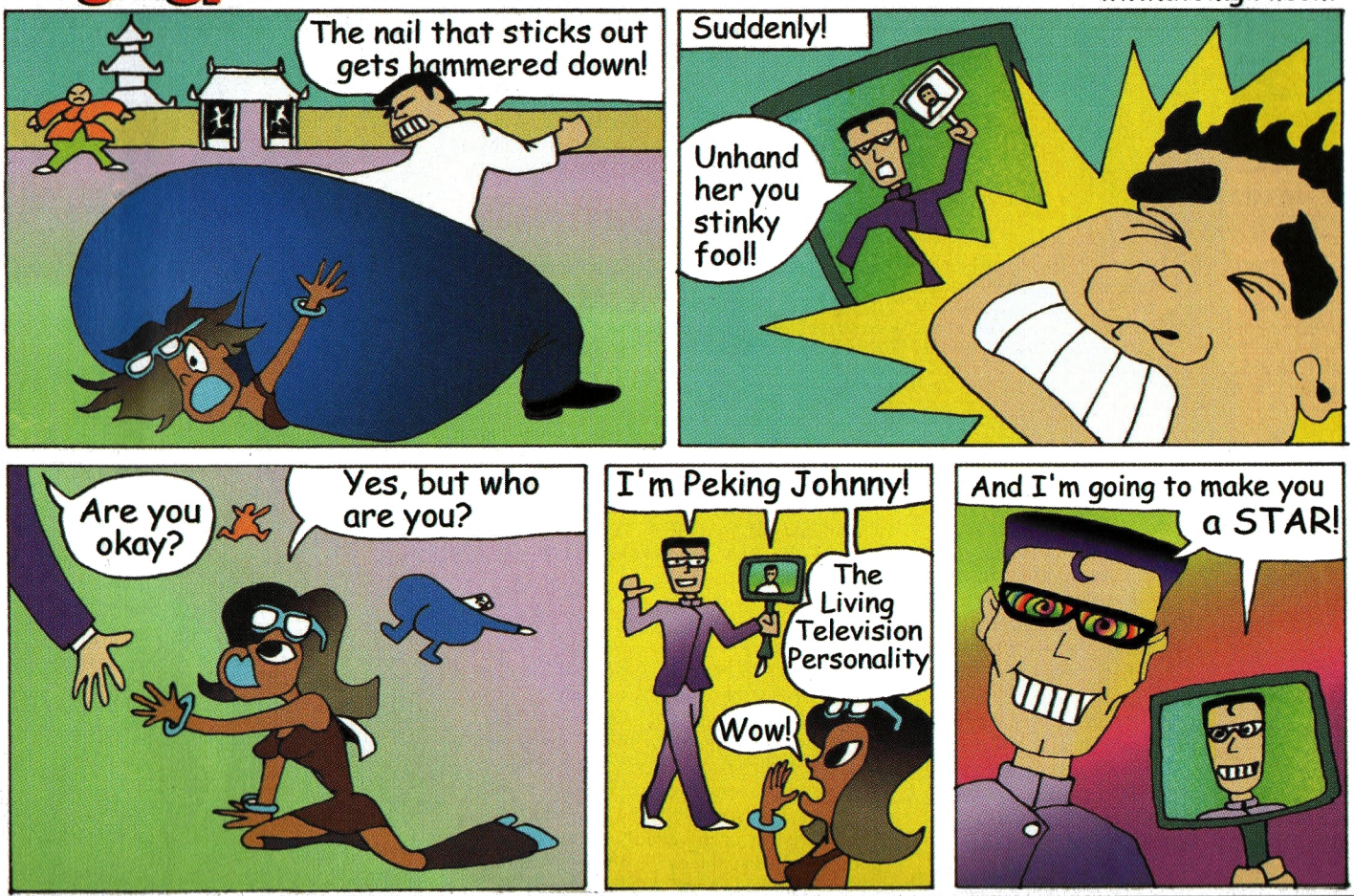
I think it gots all the soul. It's just a stereotype. Just 'cause we yellow brothers, they think we got no soul. We're all soul. You know what I'm sayin'?

A DJ KRUSH FAN (at the El Rey, 6/2000)

I think it doesn't matter where it comes from. Hip-hop has soul wherever it comes from. Radio mainstream doesn't have soul.

Atomgirl

by Stafford Smith
www.atomgirl.com



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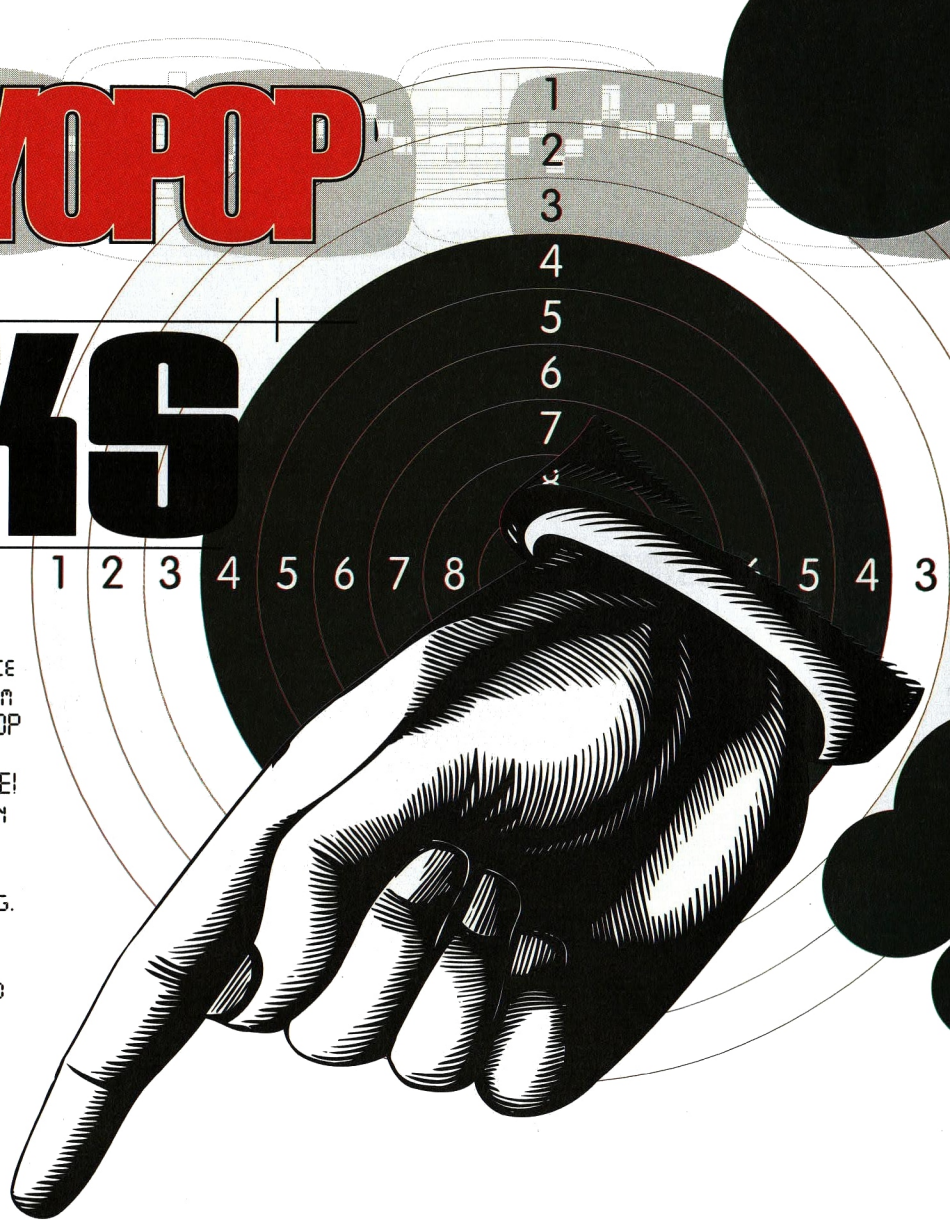
TOKYOPOP PICKS

In TOKYOPOP's Huge Treasure Chest of goodies, a handful of cool, USDA select items are taken from the shelves and showcased in the magazine. This is the place to find everything you've ever wanted from Asia, at our special price . . . ALL TOKYOPOP members get discounts, so go online, sign on, and become a member. It's free! For those of you who want more perks, join as a V.I.P. member! (V.I.P. stand for "very impressionable popper"). So go ahead, browse, mingle, try on a Buddhist monk bag. It's your store!!!

VIPs receive even BIGGER savings (hard to image, but true), and FREE SHIPPING on domestic orders over $25.



In the Game Zone . . .

CARD CAPTOR SAKURA (GAMEBOY)

TOKYOPOP Price: $52.00

Everybody's favorite anime heroine, CardCaptor, is now brought to your hands in this awesome game for Gameboy. Help her save the world!

DRUMMANIA (PS2)

TOKYOPOP Price: $150.00

Fueled by the popularity of Konami's *Benami* series, *DrumMania* for PS2 keeps the import beat kickin'. Be in tune with the Japanese import scene!

EVERGRACE (PS2)

TOKYOPOP Price: $65.00

Cool graphics, some really cute read-heads, and characters that actually speak! This RPG is one of the most rad PS2 titles to date. See for yourself!

S'more Picks

Summer Fashion Alert . . .

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TOKYOPOP Price: $15.89
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Spunkier than ever, Supergirl is back on this stone-washed blue 100% cotton tee. Be the bomb in this adorable piece. Wear it with cargo shorts or capri pants.

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VIP MEMBER Price: $9.99

Take me out to the ballgame, baby! It's the bottom of the 9th on a lonely Friday night . . . and you're desperate to score. No problem. Just slip on your phat Yankee cap and the ladies will come running. I promise. Available in a range stylish of colors.

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Sylia, Priss, Nene, and Rinna turn the heat up. These fine females are now available on stunning color apparel that will make you the envy of your fellow Bubblegum friends!

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KOREA GIRL: KOREA GIRL (CD)

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1998 marked the sad end of this short-lived band. This disc features the best of everything Korea Girl ever recorded. Make it part of your collection today.

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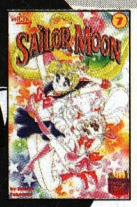
The masked merrymakers of surf team up with cult Legends RUDY RAY MORE, BLOWFLY, NEIL HAMBURGER and DONNY DENIM. Heat up any summer soiree with this jamming' CD.

Summer Reading . . .



SAILOR MOON POCKET MIXX #7

TOKYOPOP Price: $8.46
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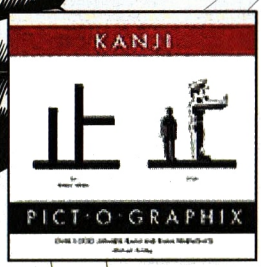
The Scouts are helpless as they watch Sailor Pluto on the verge of death. Yikes! Catch all the action in this gripping edition of the nation's best-selling graphic novel series.

Special gift with purchase of any *Sailor Moon* book or manga during August!



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In this final manga of the first series, the Magic Knights confront the evil Lord Zagato, and must use their powers in an all-out battle to save Cephiro. The shocking conclusion will leave *Rayearth* fans stunned and speechless.

No Vidiots Allowed . . .

REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA (DVD2)

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Can Utena fight the love of her life? If not, her best friend will lose her freedom. Contains episodes 8-13 and bonus music.

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Who really wants the warlock dead, and how far will Gateau go to avenge the death of his former partner, Opera? Follow the *Sorcerer Hunters* as they go undercover to unlock the secrets!

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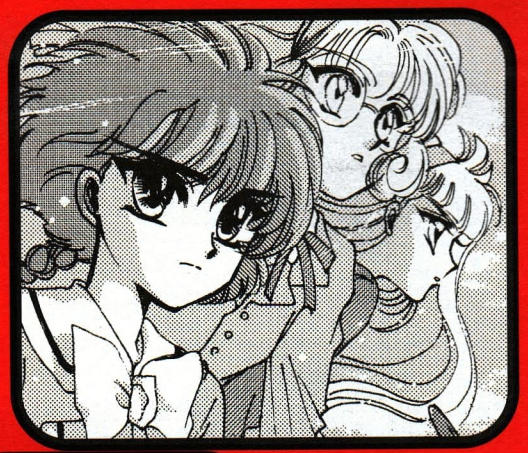
TOKYOPOP.com

CLAMP's "Magic Knight Rayearth"

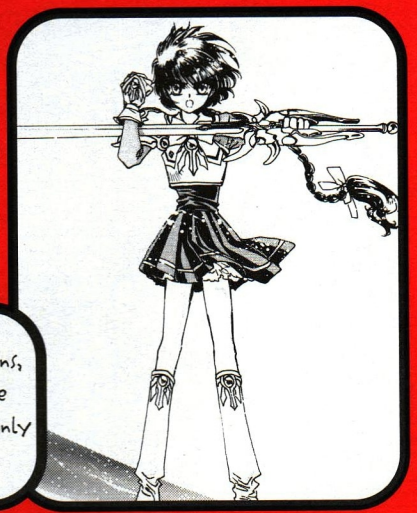
CLAMP is an all-female team at the vanguard of today's shoujo manga ("shoujo" means "young girl" in Japanese, and "manga" means "motionless picture entertainment," which you should know by now). This genre is generally targeted at young female readers between 6 and 18 years of age. However, certain artist, such as Clamp, have been able to master the cross-over market, attracting a tremendous number of male readers, as well as female.

Currently, CLAMP consists of four members. Nanase Okawa is the writer in charge of scripts. Apapa Mokona is the main artist, creating backgrounds and characters. Both Mick Nekoi and Satsuki Igarashi are assistants. CLAMP has created motionless titles such as *RG Veda*, *X*, *Tokyo Babylon*, *CLAMP Campus Detective Service*, *Cardcaptor Sakura*, *Miyuki-chan in Wonderland*, and *Clover*, as well as *Magic Knight Rayearth*, our favorite.

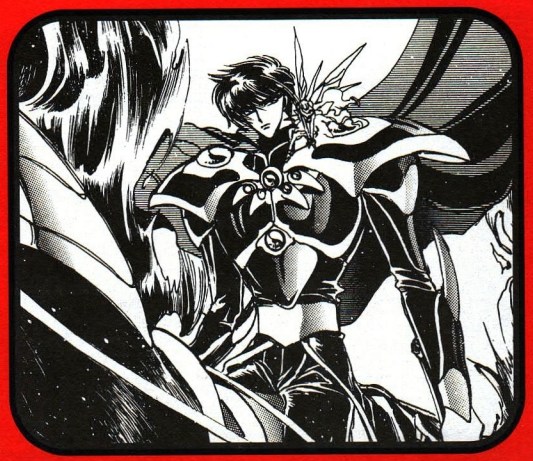


MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH

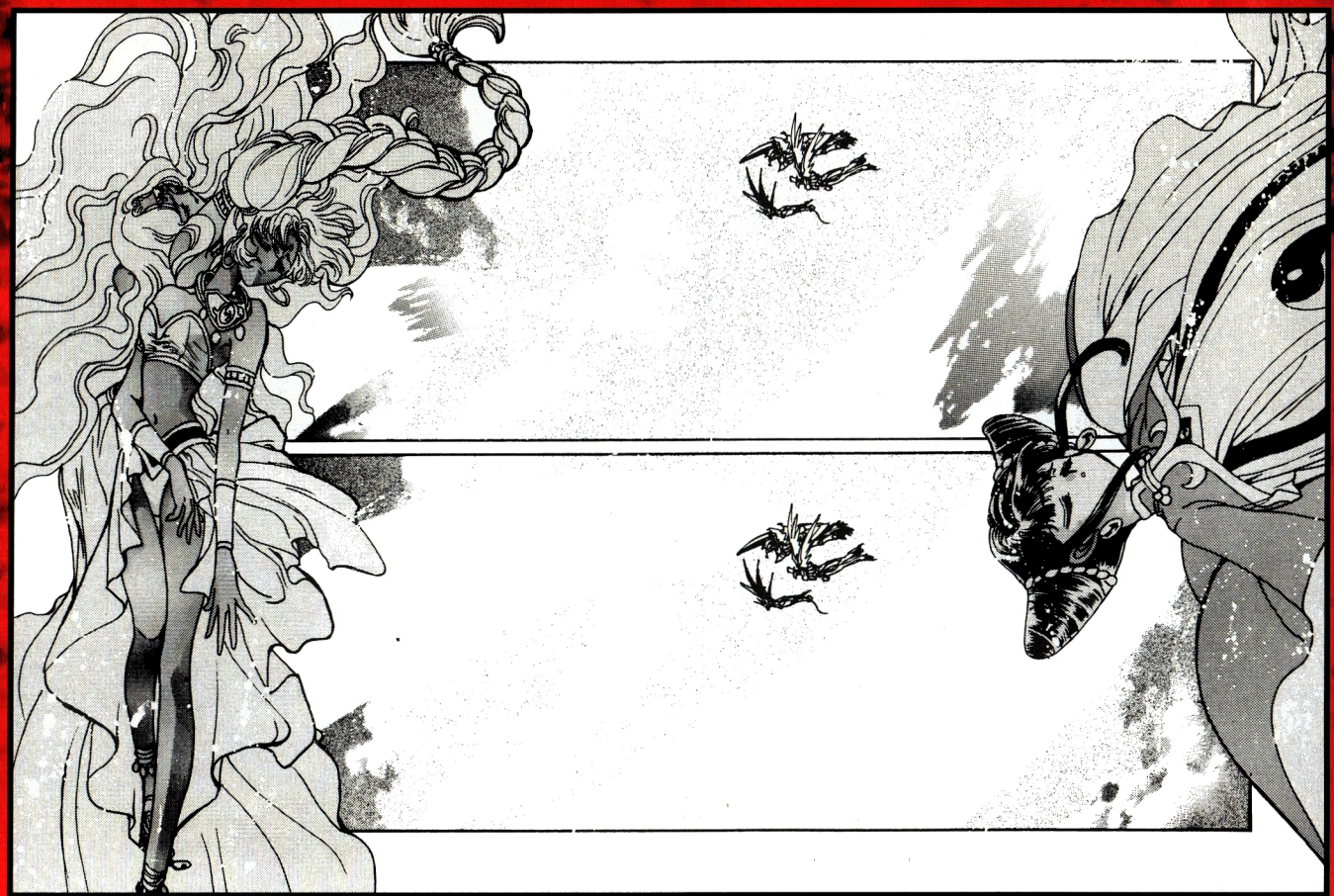
Hikaru, Umi and Fuu were ordinary teenagers until they were transported to the magical land of Cephiro and became the legendary Magic Knights.



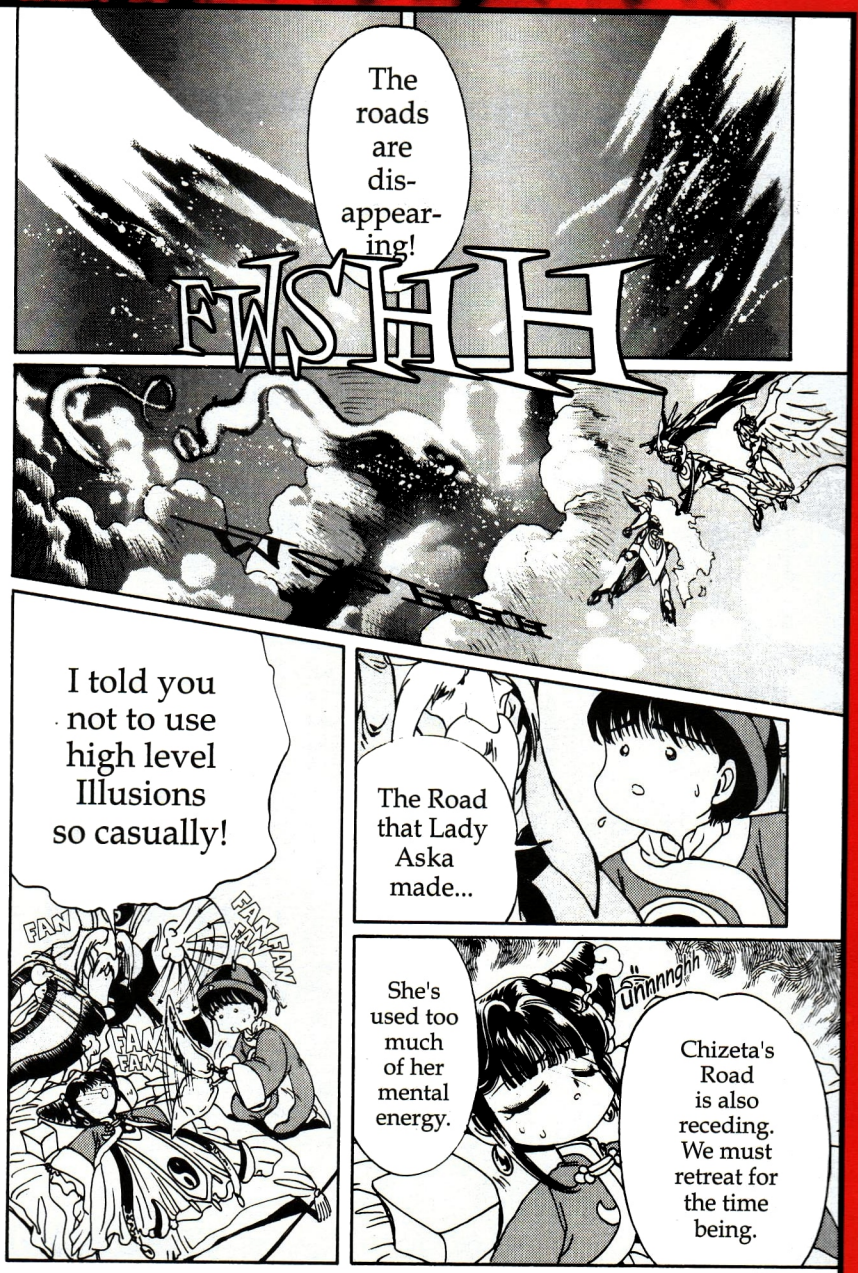
With their magical weapons, giant robot guardians, and strength of heart, the Magic Knights are Cephiro's only hope in times of Darkness.



In our last issue... High Schoolers Hikaru, Umi, and Fuu are donning their magic armor to fight for Cephiro once again. This time they must help find a new Pillar for Cephiro before the city crumbles from the lack of leadership. To make matters worse, three rival nations are battling in the skies over Cephiro with the hopes of conquering the vulnerable land. If our heroes fail it means death or slavery for the people of Cephiro. The mysterious warrior Lantis, brother of the late sol Zagato, has vowed to stop the Magic Knights, lest they restart the cycle that led to his brother's death.

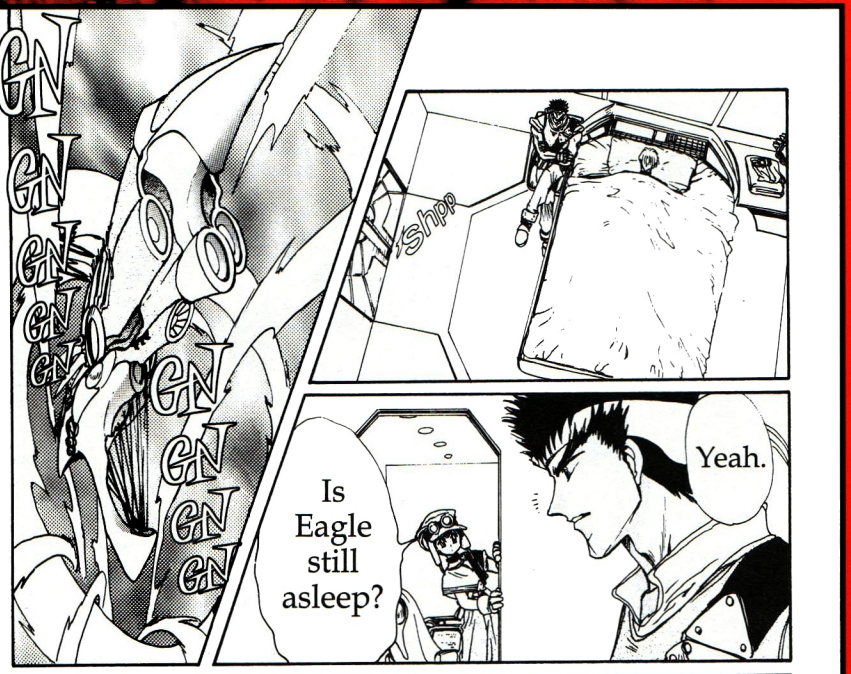


THOOMM
FLOP
SQUIK
Lady Asuka!

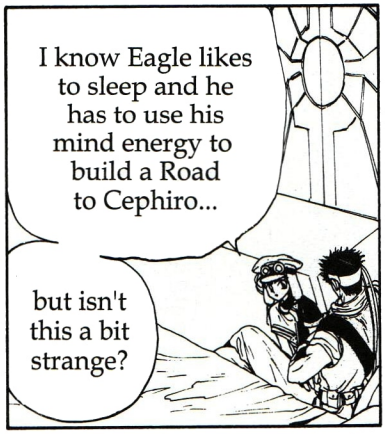

The roads are dis-appear-ing!
FWSHH
I told you not to use high level Illusions so casually!
FAN
FAN FAN
FAN FAN
The Road that Lady Aska made...
She's used too much of her mental energy.
ünnnnghh
Chizeta's Road is also receding. We must retreat for the time being.

Roads...
Roads that only the Pillar of Cephiro can open...
And the Test that awaits those who travel those Roads...
The Pillar of Cephiro...

Are you hiding something from us?
At his worst, he sleeps the whole day away.
It doesn't matter on his day off, but we're invading now.
...Eagle...


GN GN GN GN GN GN GN GN GN GN GN GN
shop
Is Eagle still asleep?
Yeah.

He hasn't moved a bit. He's been asleep since before.


I know Eagle likes to sleep and he has to use his mind energy to build a Road to Cephiro...
but isn't this a bit strange?

.....

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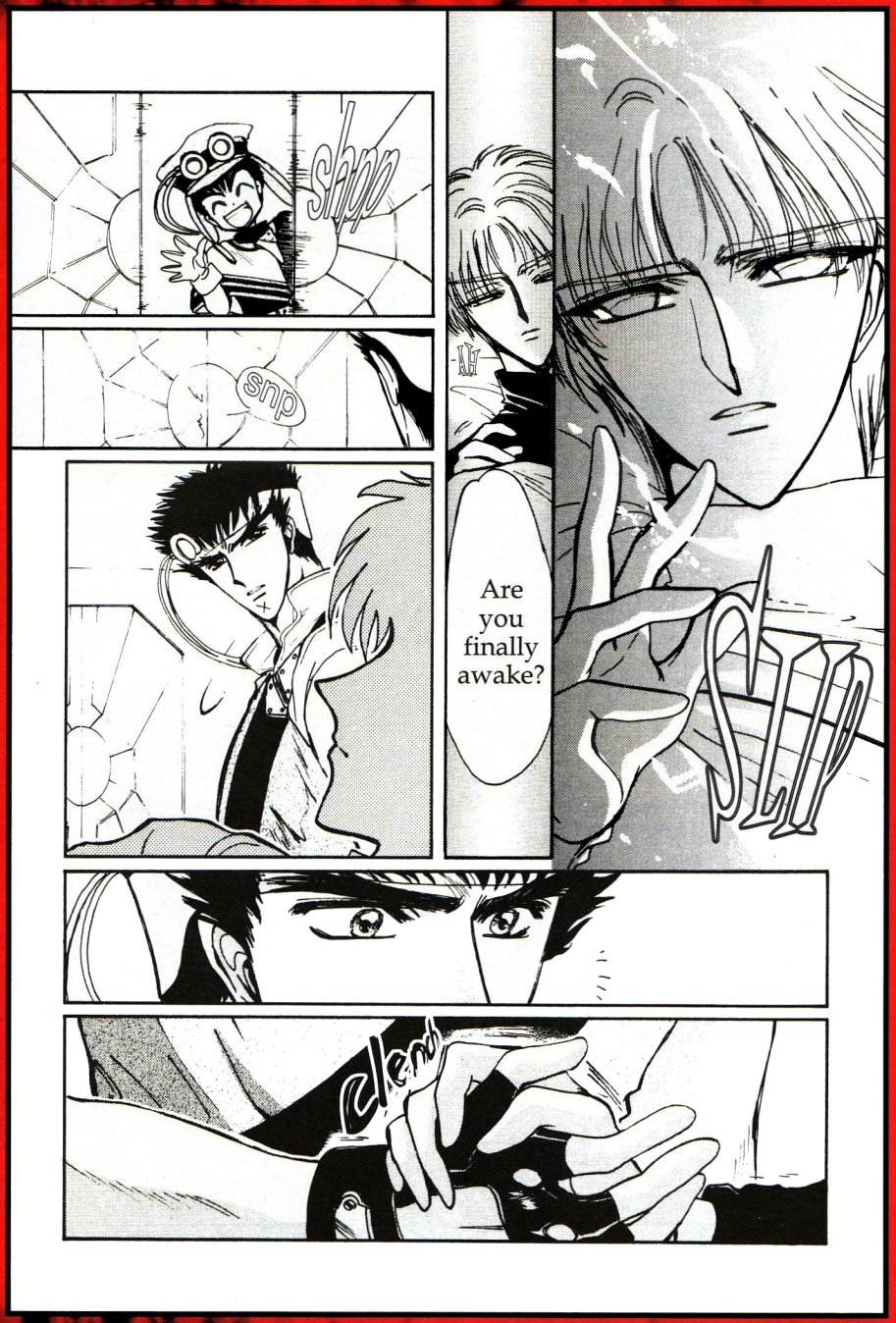

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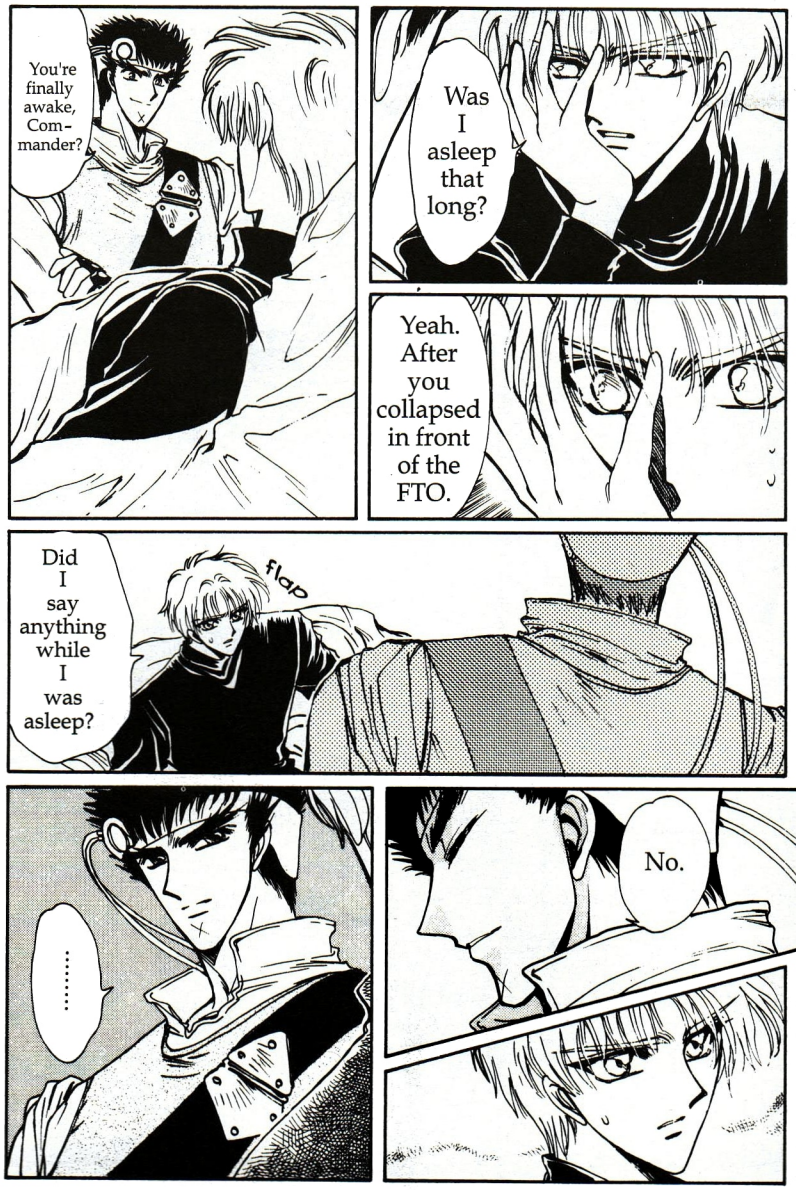
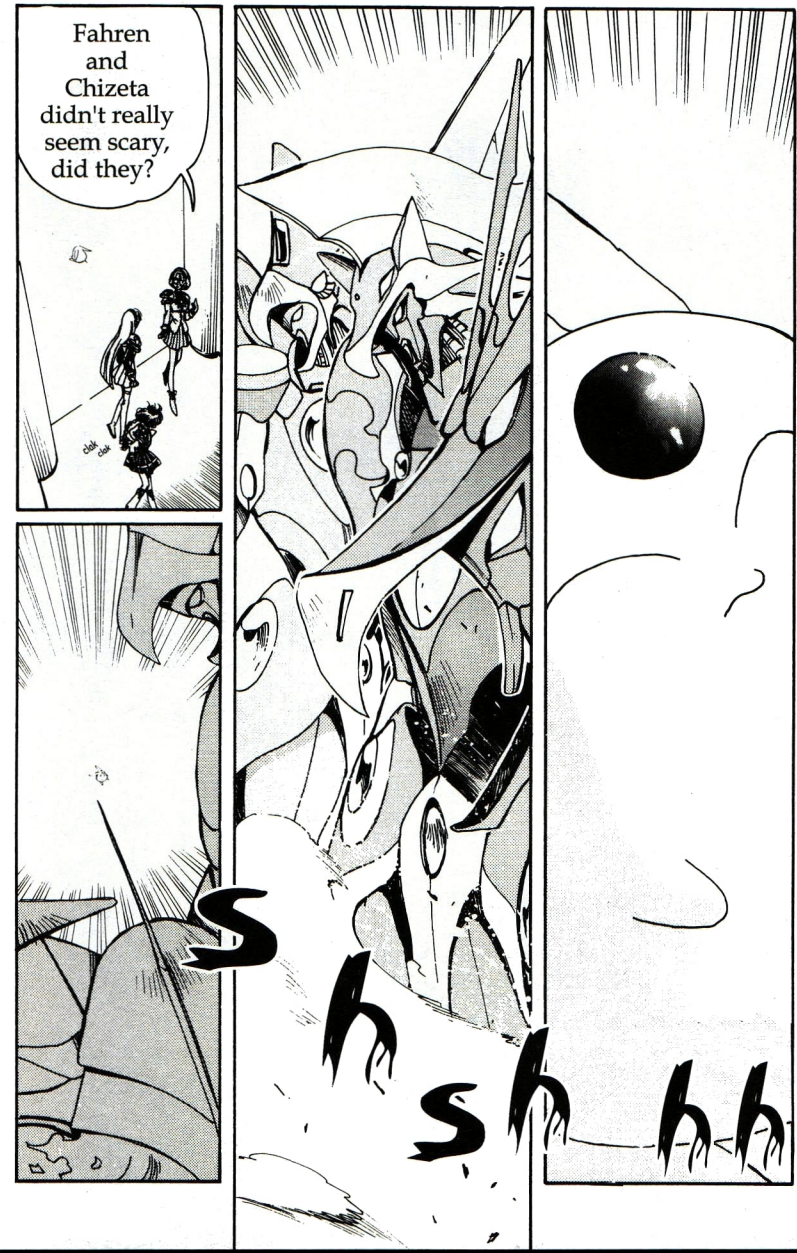
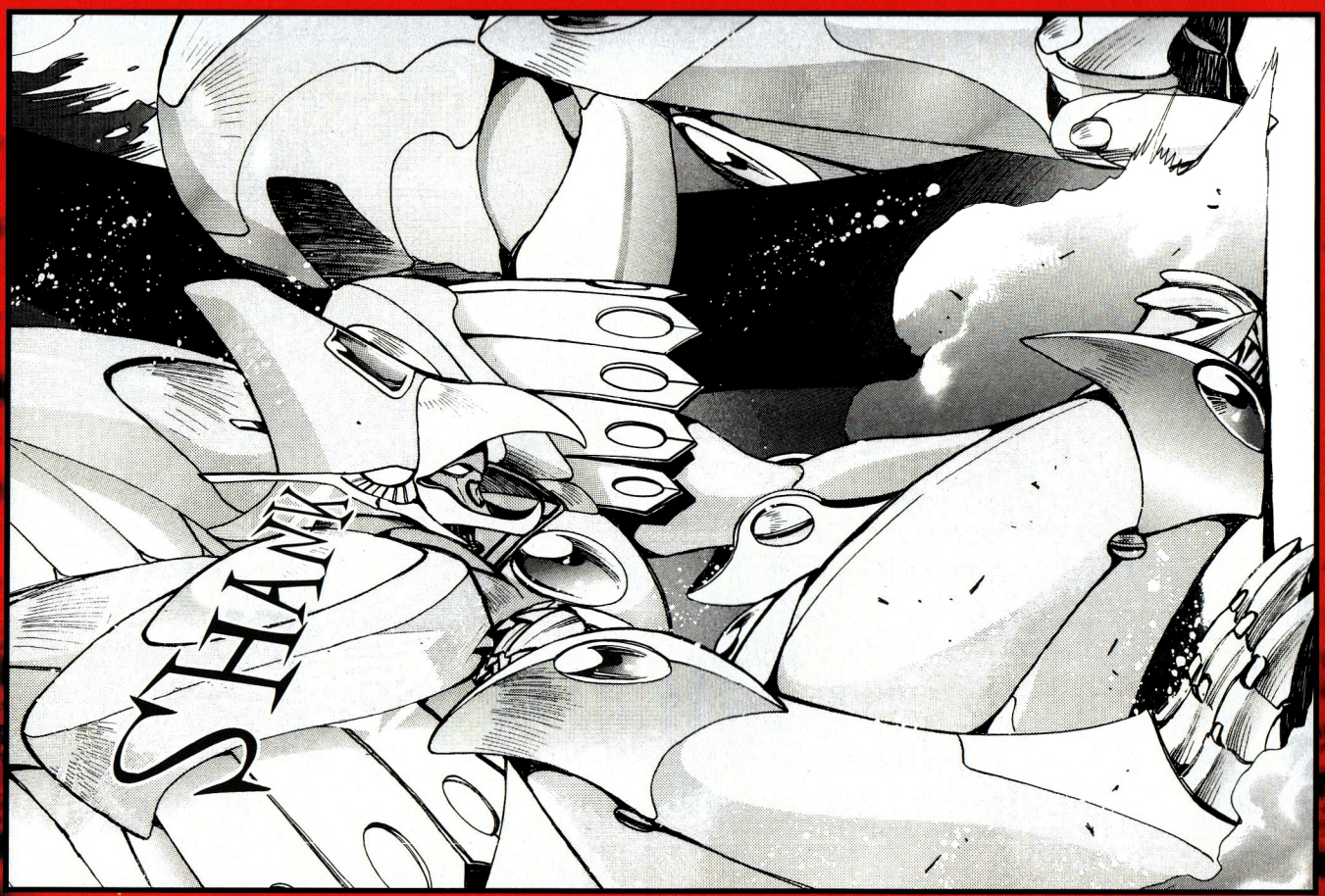


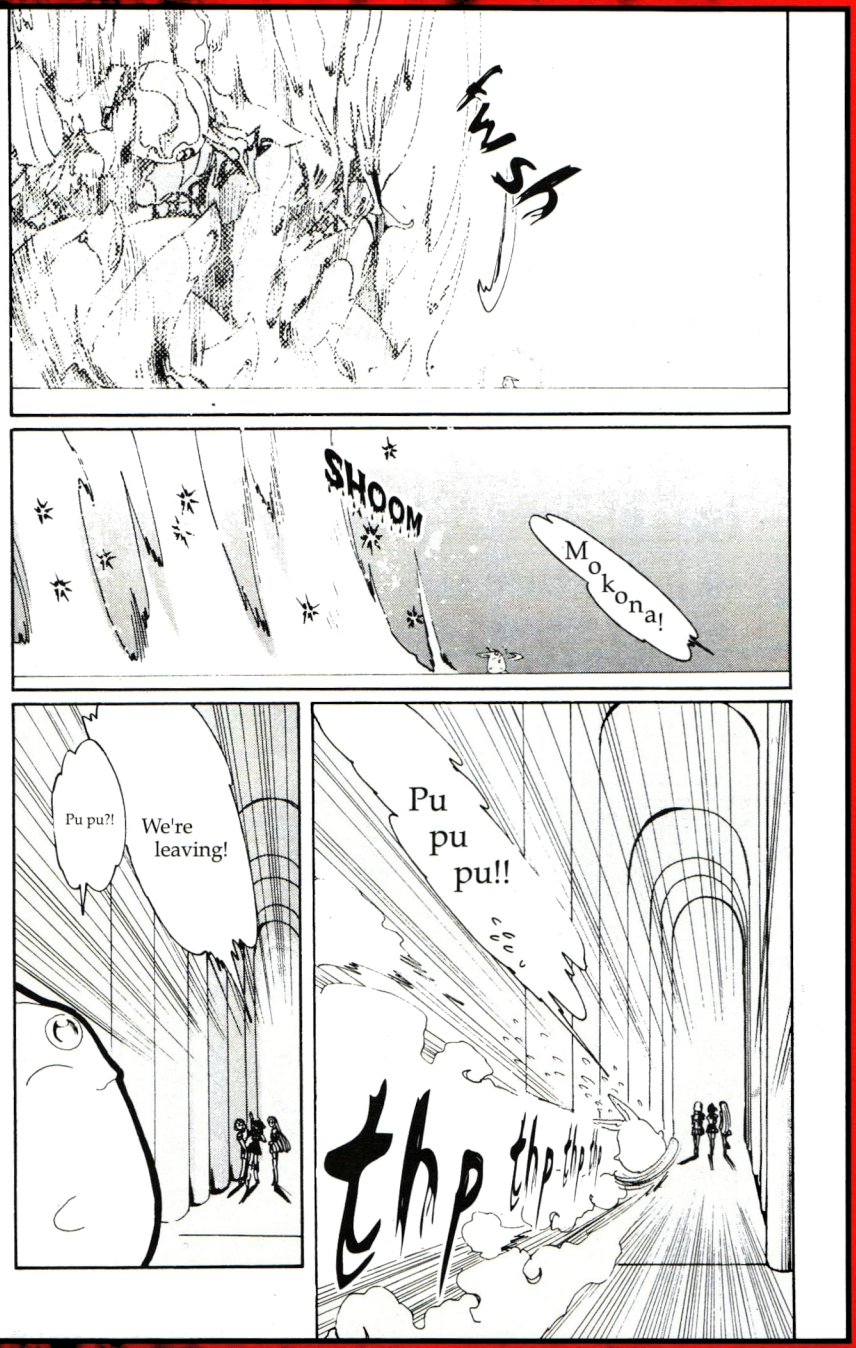

Fahren and Chizeta didn't really seem scary, did they?
click click
SHHHHH

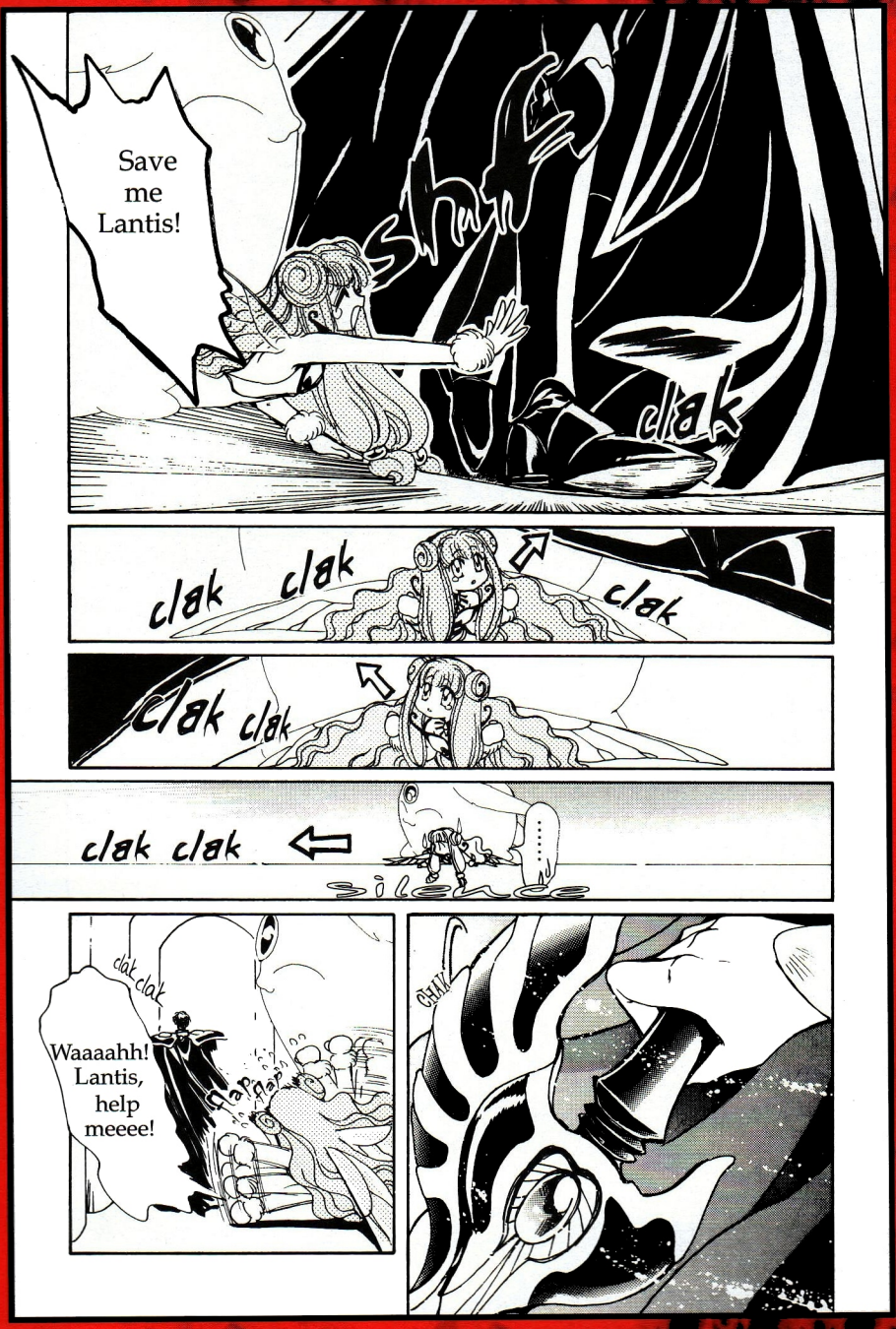
FRRUMBLE
Pu Pu!
SHINNG
"Pu! Pu! Pu!"
We're okay, Mokona. We weren't hurt.
They just ignored us and started fighting each other.
There was no way we could get hurt.
those genies and the giant zombie...
JUMP

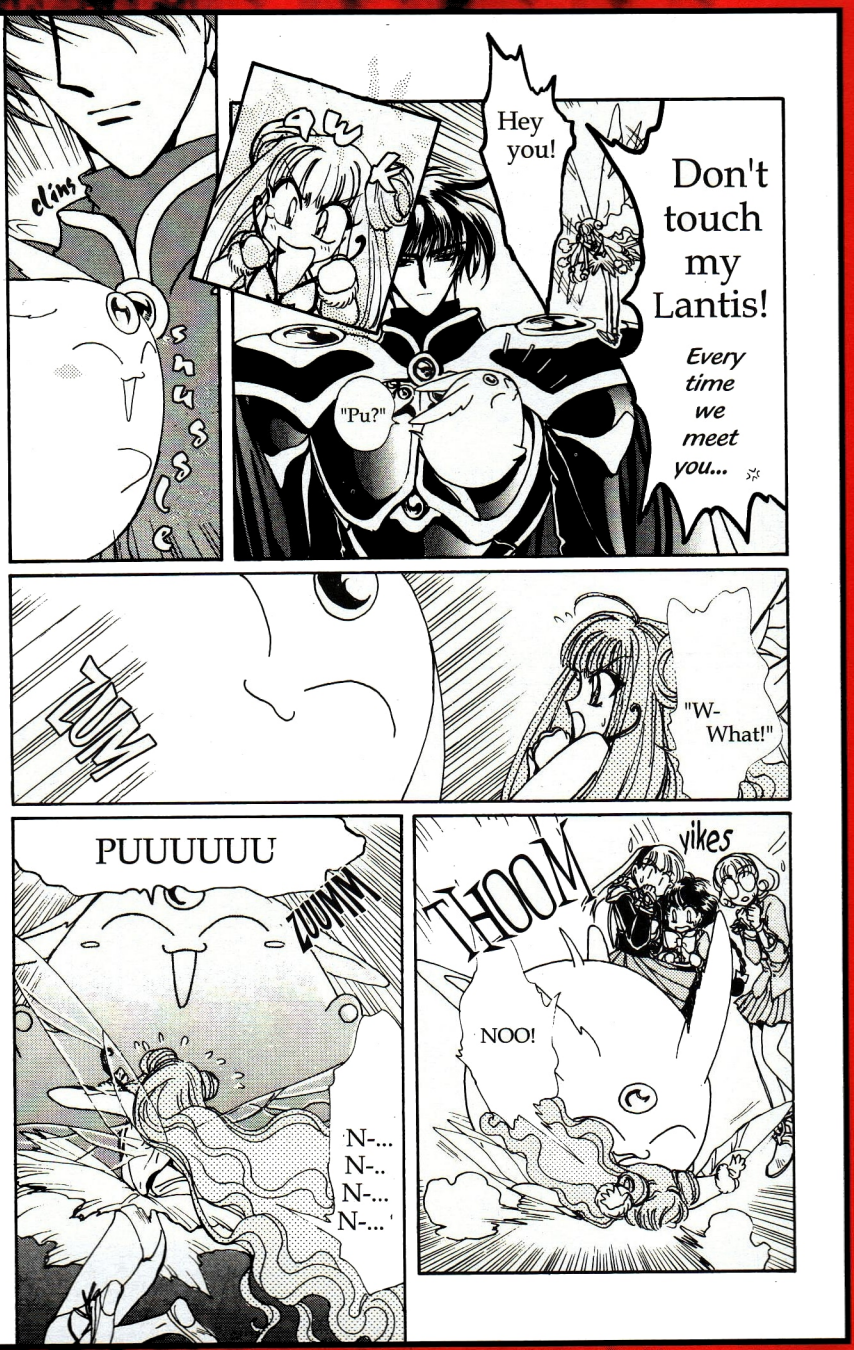
XINES

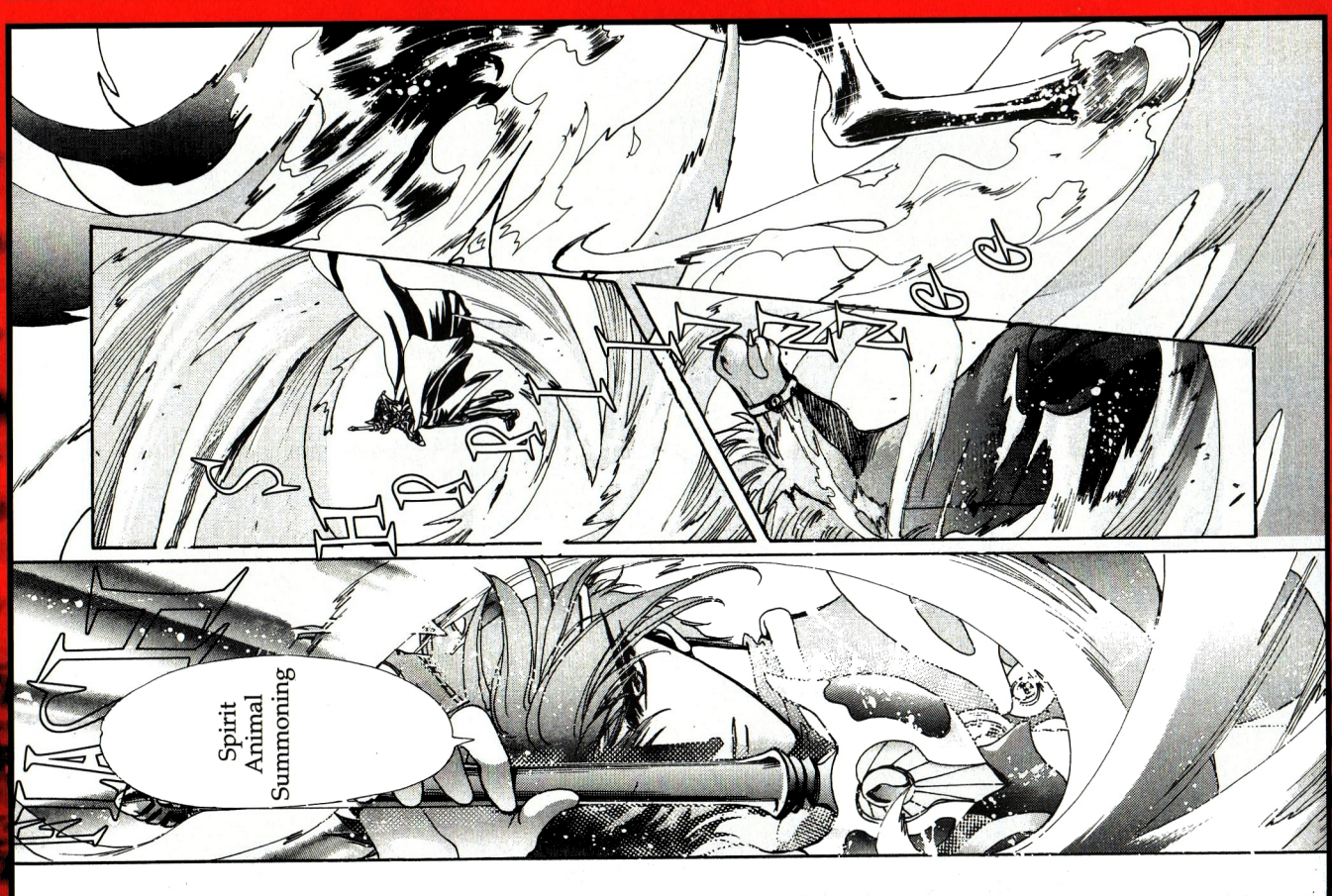

SHANK

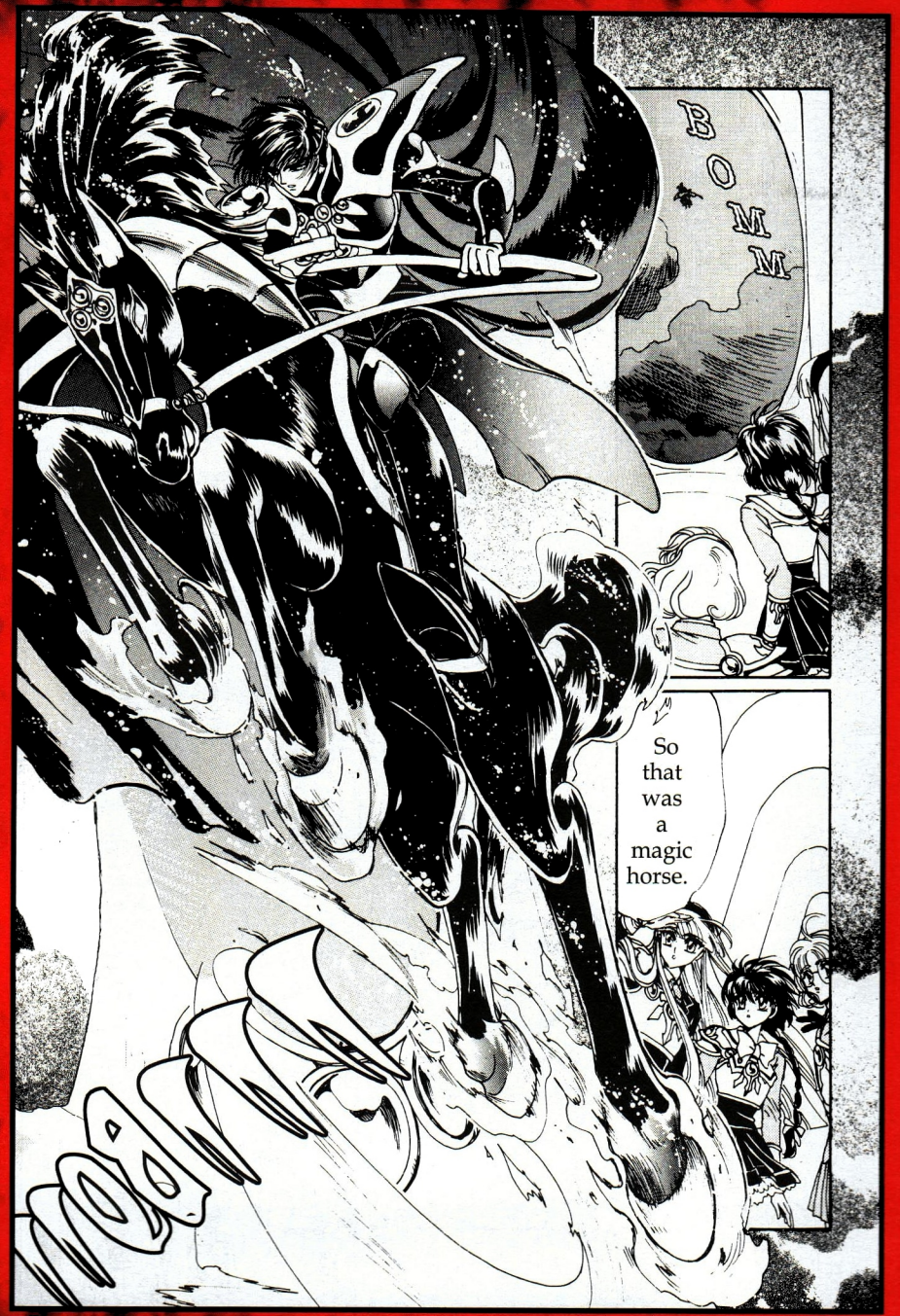
Puuu! ♡
gasp
clak
Lantis...


fwish
SHOOM
Mokona!
Pu pu?!
We're leaving!
Pu pu pu!!
thp thp thp


Save me Lantis!
shuff
clak
clak clak clak
clak clak
clak clak
.....
silence
clak clak
Waaaahh! Lantis, help meeee!
flap flap
CHAK


Don't touch my Lantis!
Every time we meet you...
Hey you!
"Pu?"
clins
snussle
"W- What!"
ZUM
PUUUUUU
ZUUMM
N-... N-.. N-... N-...
THOOM
yikes
NOO!


Spirit
Animal
Summoning



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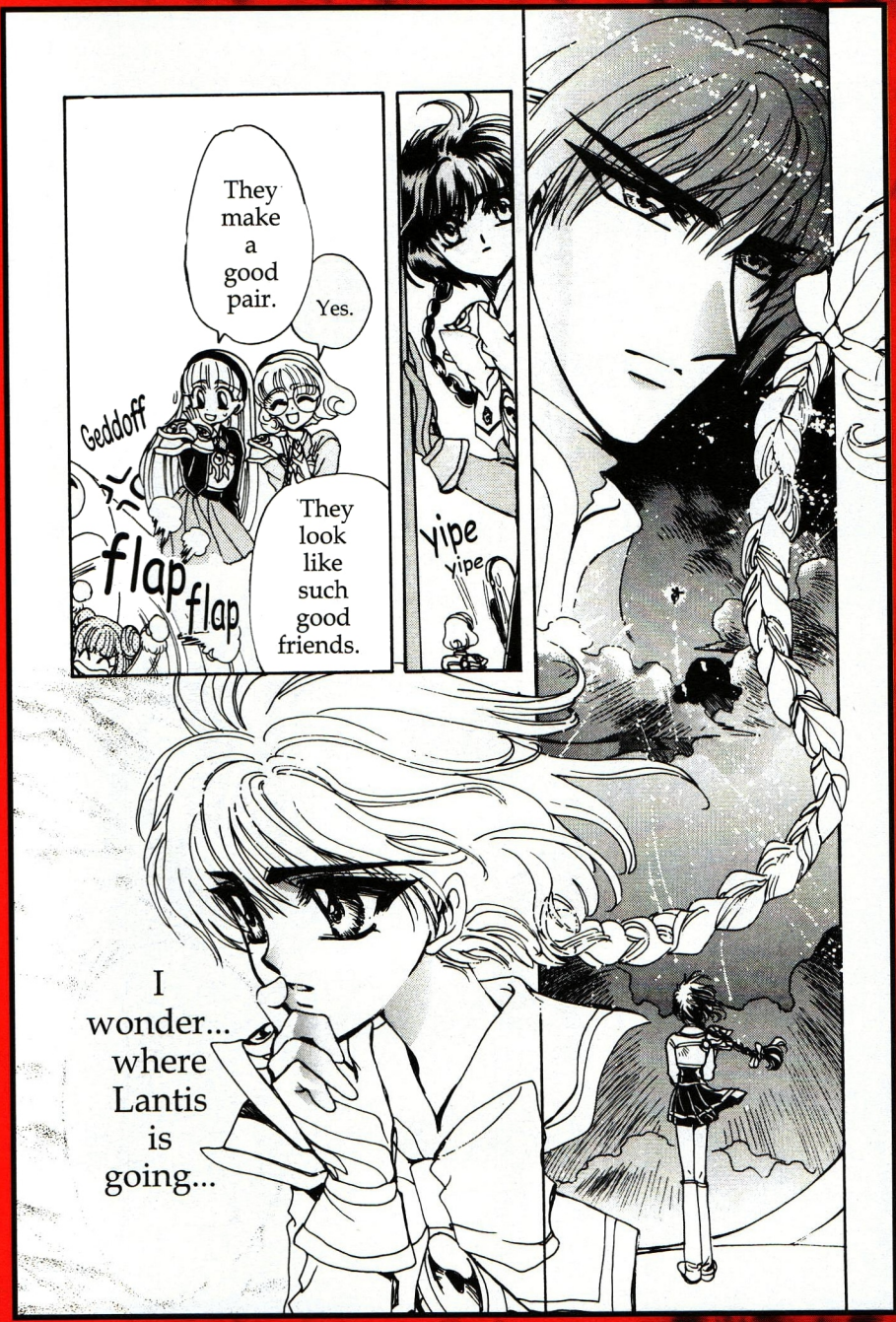
I wonder... where Lantis is going...
They make a good pair.
Yes.
Geddoff
flap flap
They look like such good friends.
yipe yipe

I get it!! You're trying to get in the way of my affair with Lantis!
I'm so cute that you're jealous!!
Whoo
What?! What's with that face?!
SIGH
THUMP
Yeek!

FLASH
Lantis...
Lightning!!
CHOOM!!

Lantis.
You've gotten even stronger.
You are the only Cail, the only Magic Swordsman, in Cephiro.
You have enough magical power to become an Ile,
as well as enough swordsmanship to become a Dal.
Your elder brother Zagato helps Princess Emeraude with her prayers as the Sol, the High Priest.
And you, the younger brother, protect the Princess as the Captain of the Guard.

GASP
... Guru...
Do you know about Zagato and Princess Emeraude...
Look!
This world is beautiful.
There are no natural disasters or war...
all the people live in peace.

I look forward to seeing which of you will surpass me first.
You were the one who taught my brother and I magic, Guru Clef.
And you are the highest magician in Cephiro.
We would never be able to match you.
shake
Cephiro is a world of Will.
The strength of magic, its success or failure, even the future...
The fate of all things is decided by the strength of the heart.
Those with desire are strong...
Like Zagato now...

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Is this world truly beautiful?
Lantis... has disappeared.
Why...?
I only know. that he is no longer in Cephiro.
I can't feel his presence anywhere.
.....
Shall I search for him?

No.
I know Lantis... He must have some plan.
Let's leave him alone.
As you wish.

There is nothing, Guru Clef.
No
.....
Nothing...
I will summon the Magic Knights.

Shi
fl ap
clak clak clak
clak clak
Zagato
gasp
Do you have anything to report to me?

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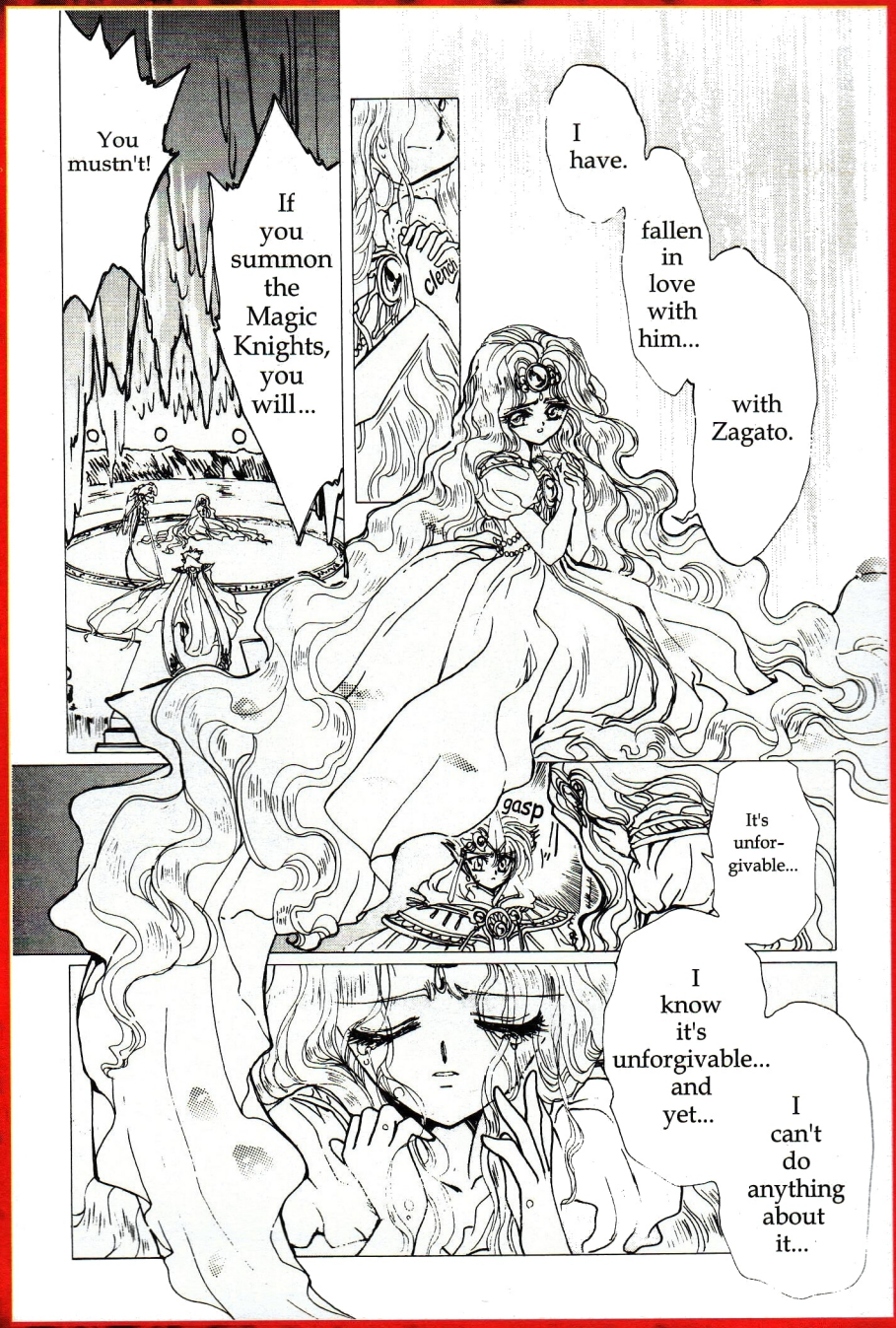
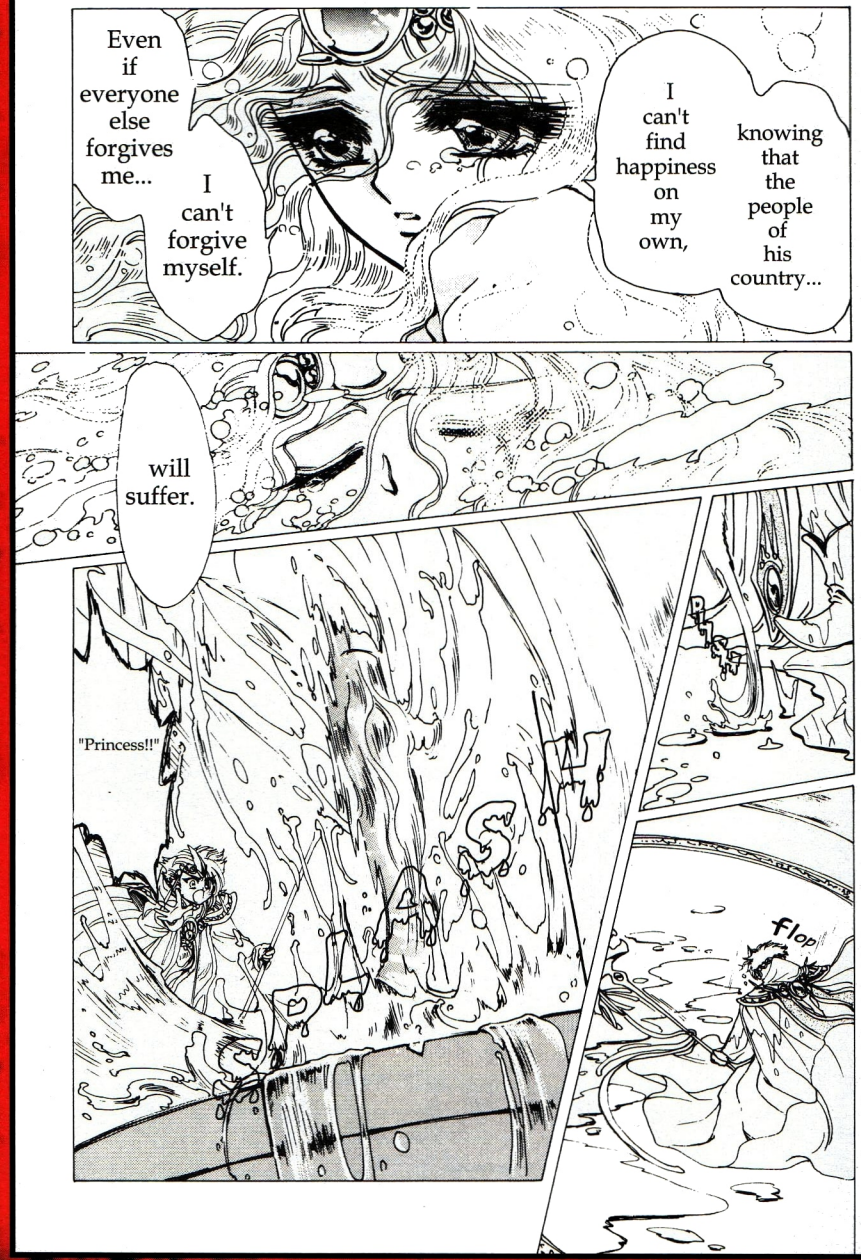
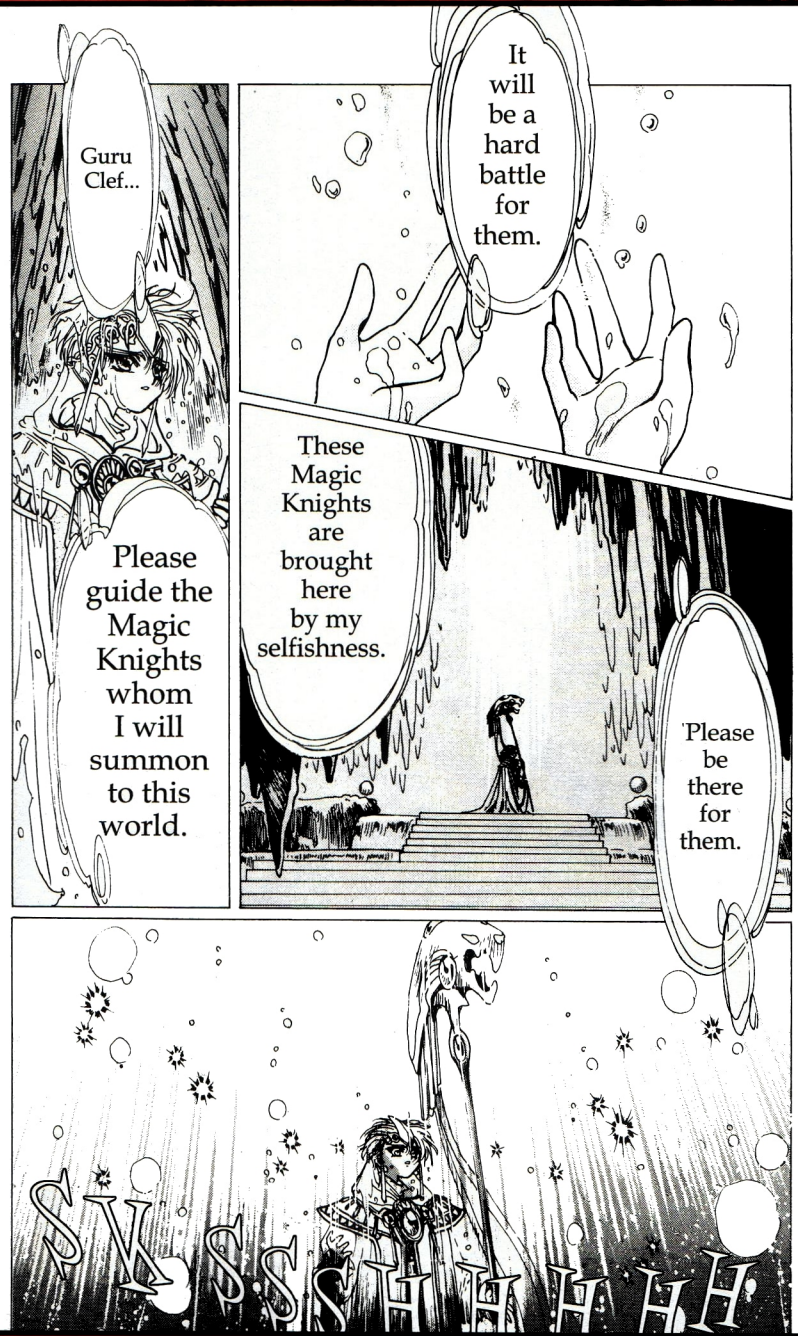
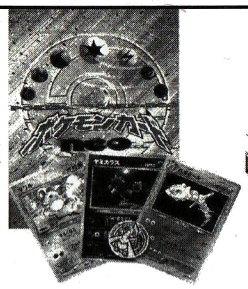



Even if everyone else forgives me...
I can't forgive myself.
I can't find happiness on my own,
knowing that the people of his country...
will suffer.
"Princess!!"
Flop


Guru Clef...
Please guide the Magic Knights whom I will summon to this world.
It will be a hard battle for them.
These Magic Knights are brought here by my selfishness.
Please be there for them.
SWSSHHHHH

POKEMON



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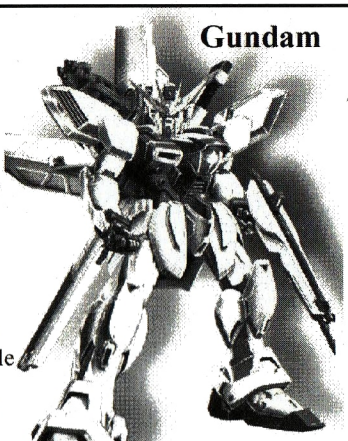

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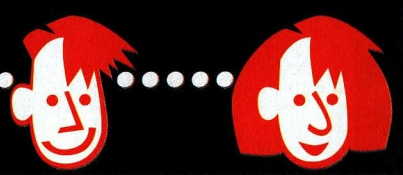

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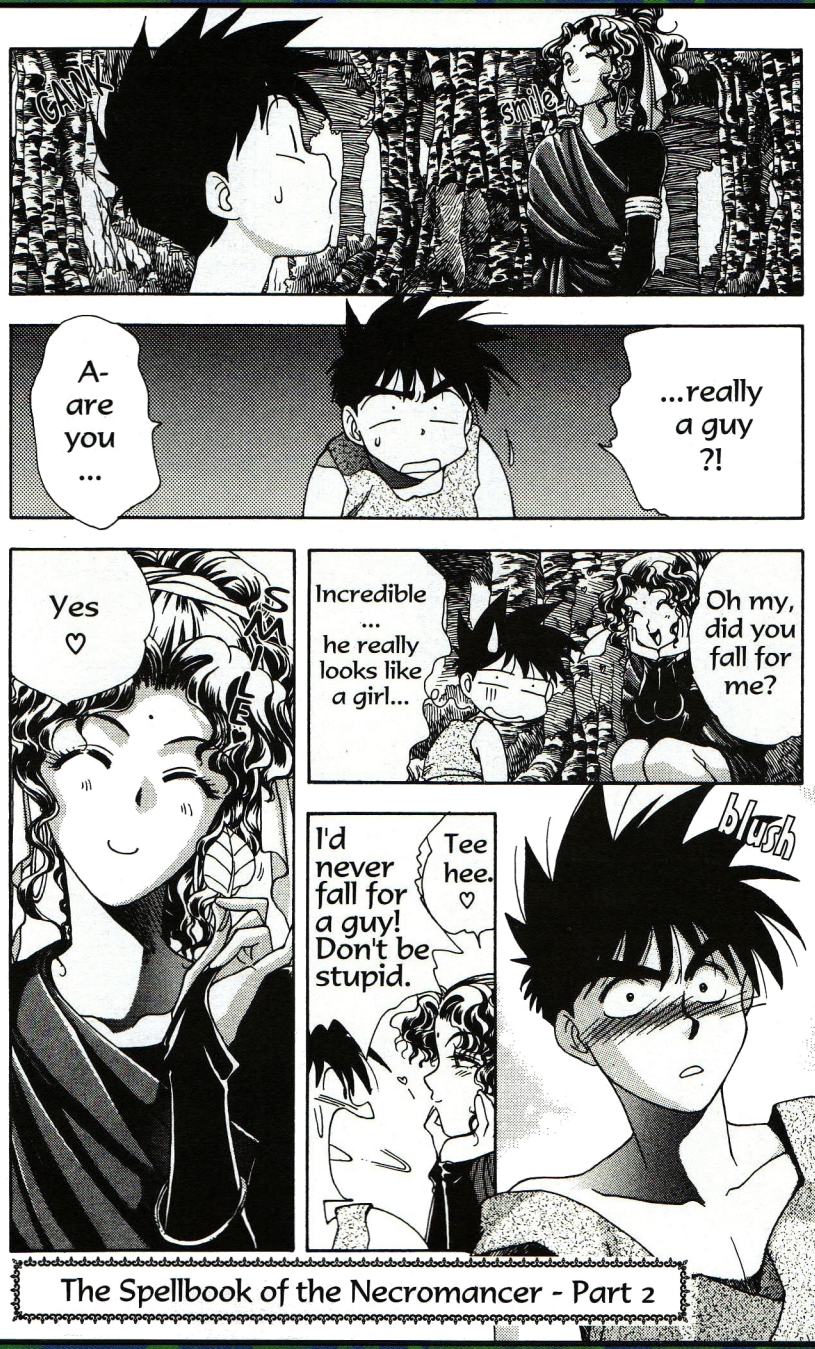
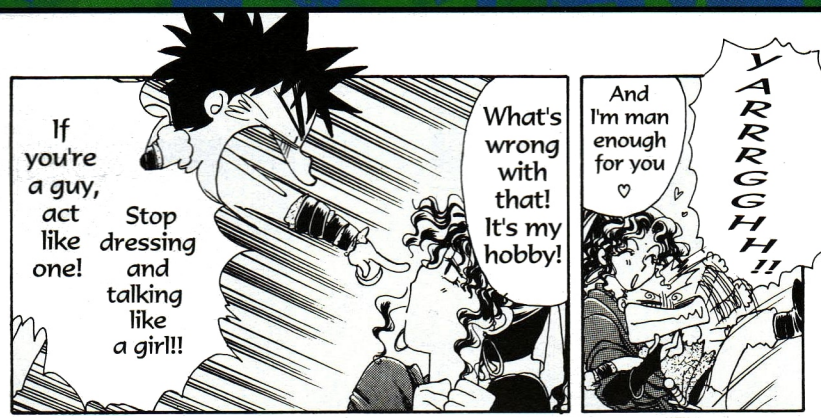
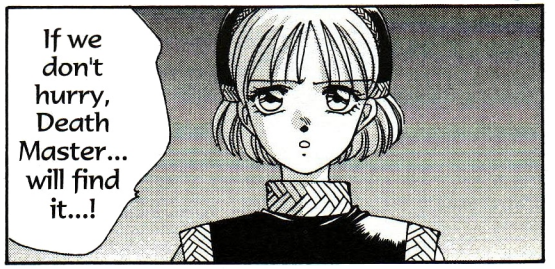
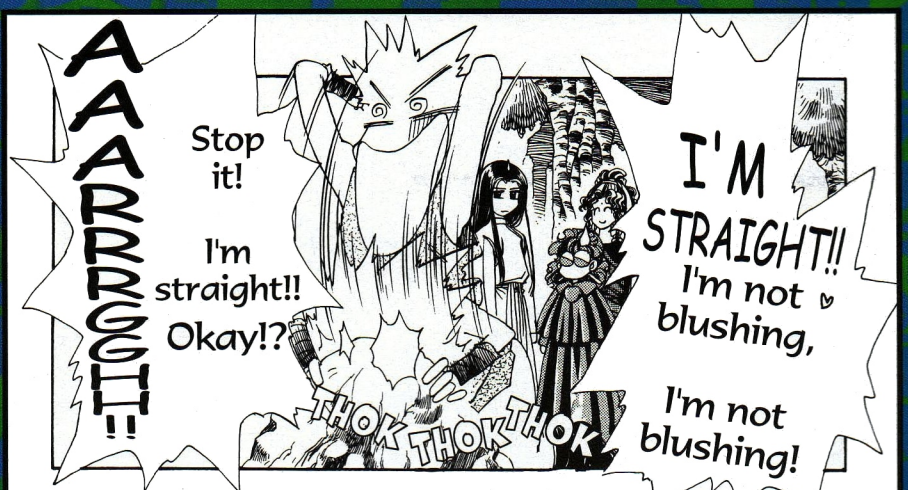


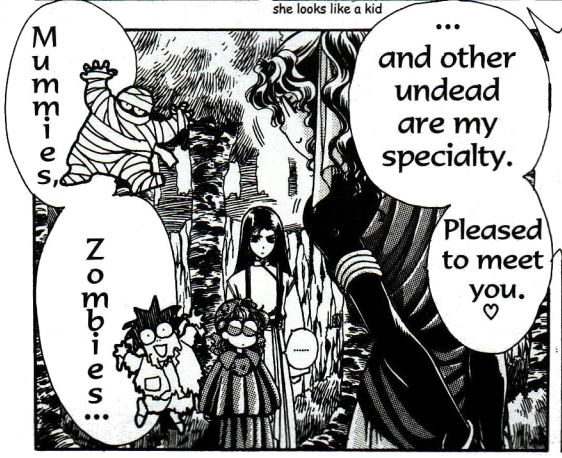
The Spellbook of the Necromancer - Part 2



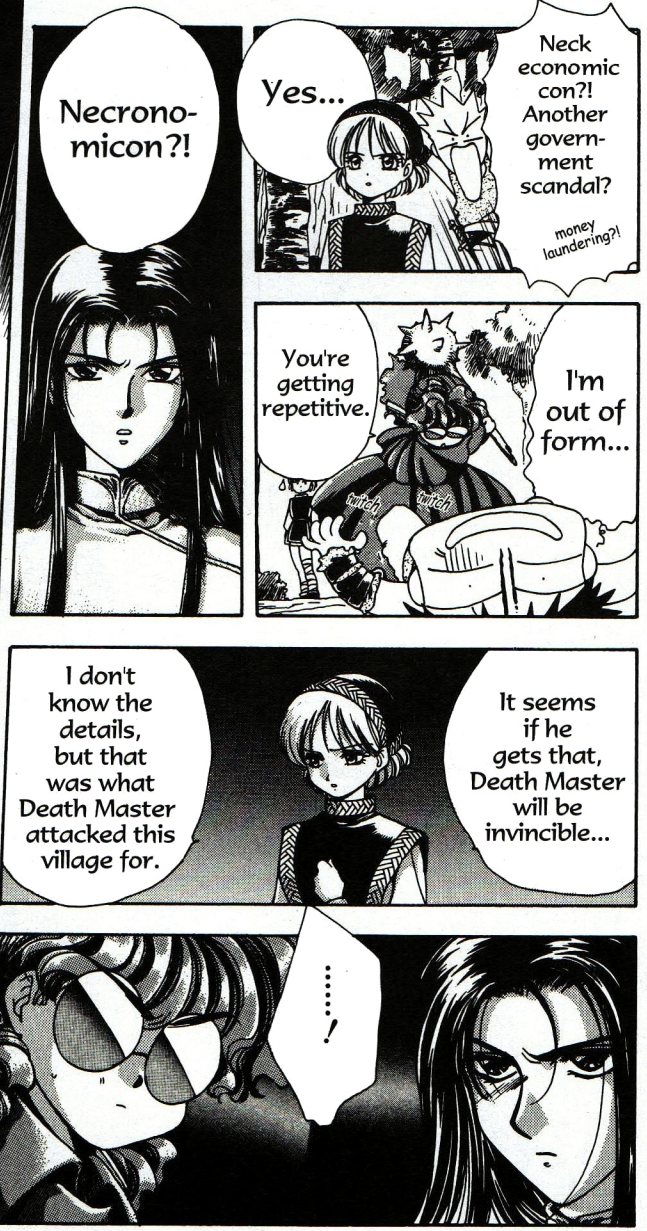


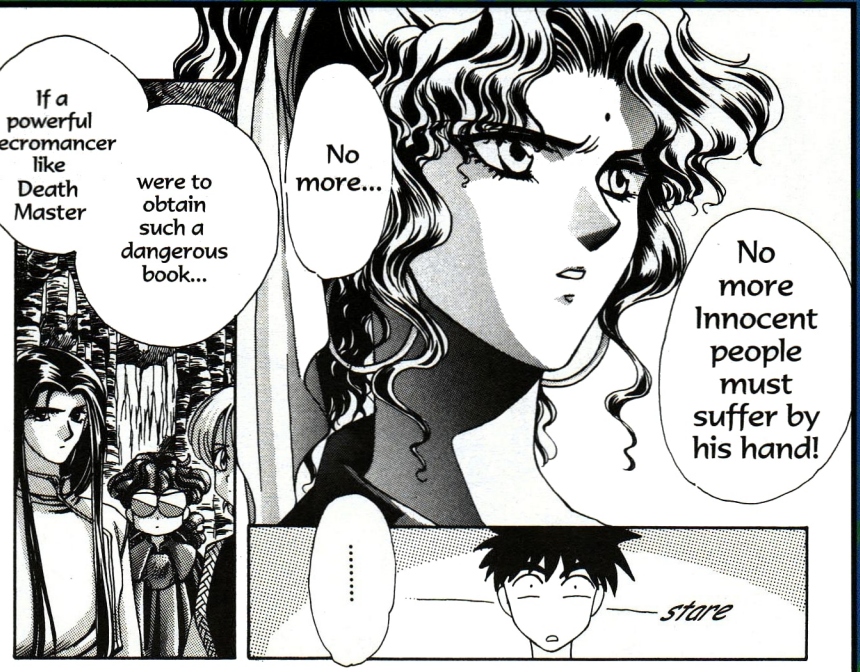


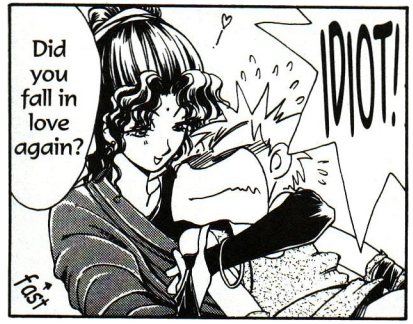
she looks like a kid

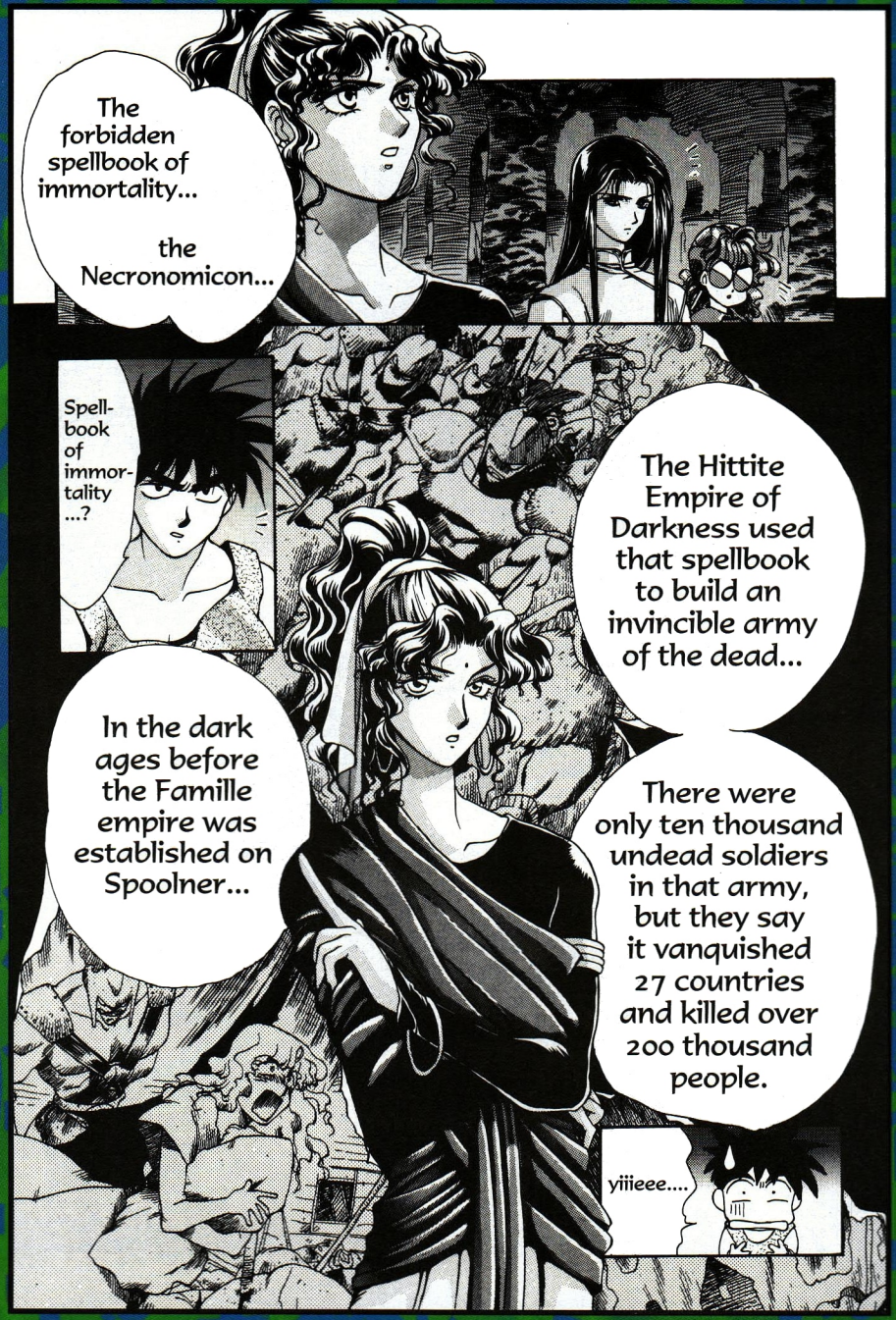


The Necronomicon!!









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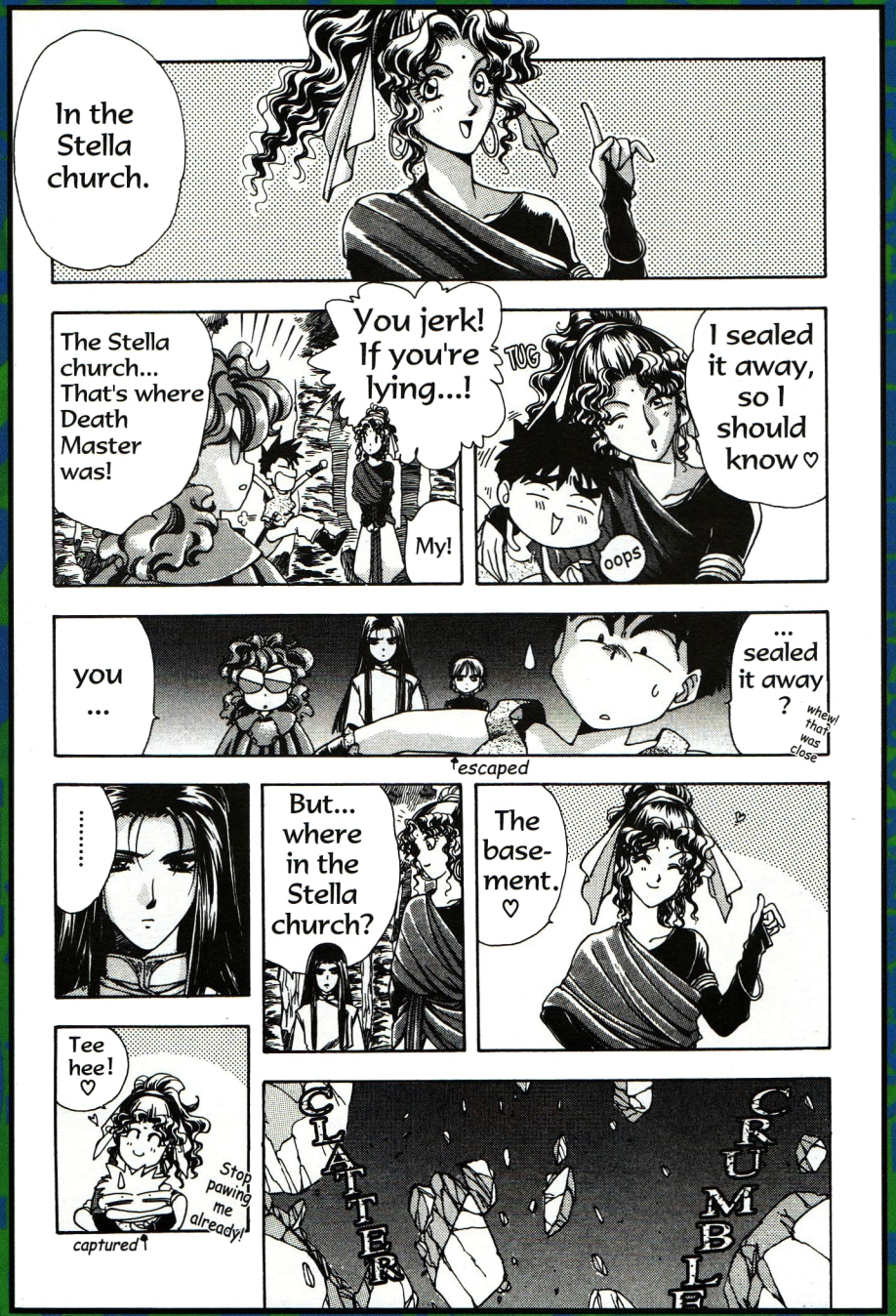

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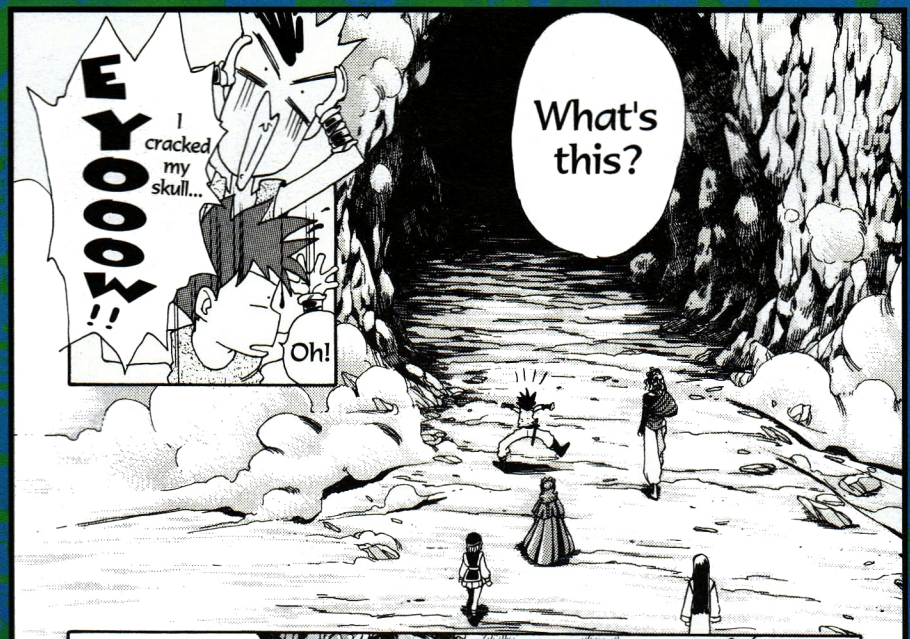
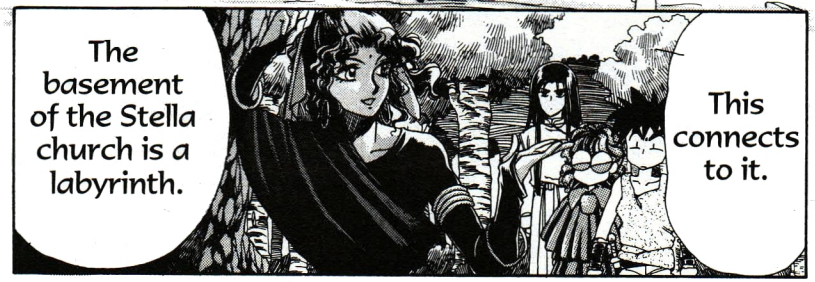
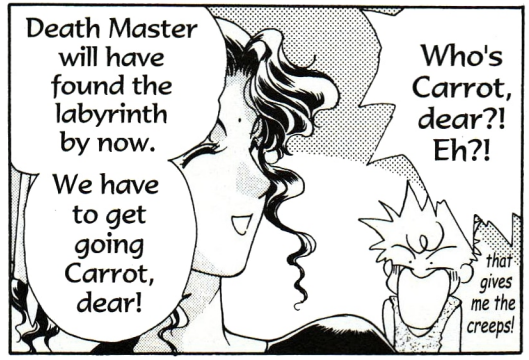
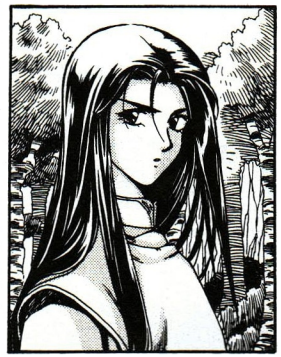
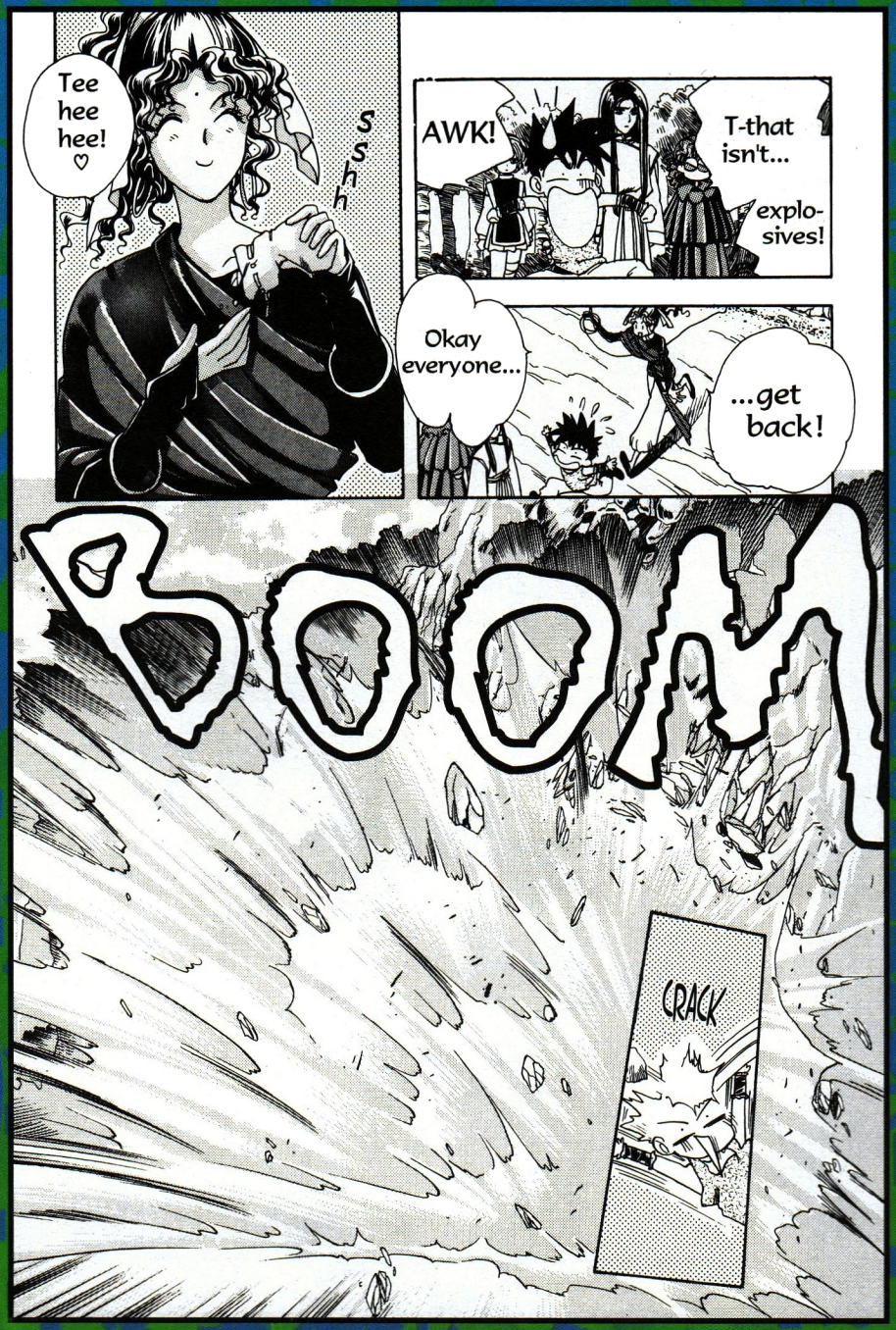

What's this?
EYOOOW!!
I cracked my skull...
Oh!


The basement of the Stella church is a labyrinth.
This connects to it.


Death Master will have found the labyrinth by now.
We have to get going Carrot, dear!
Who's Carrot, dear?! Eh?!
that gives me the creeps!



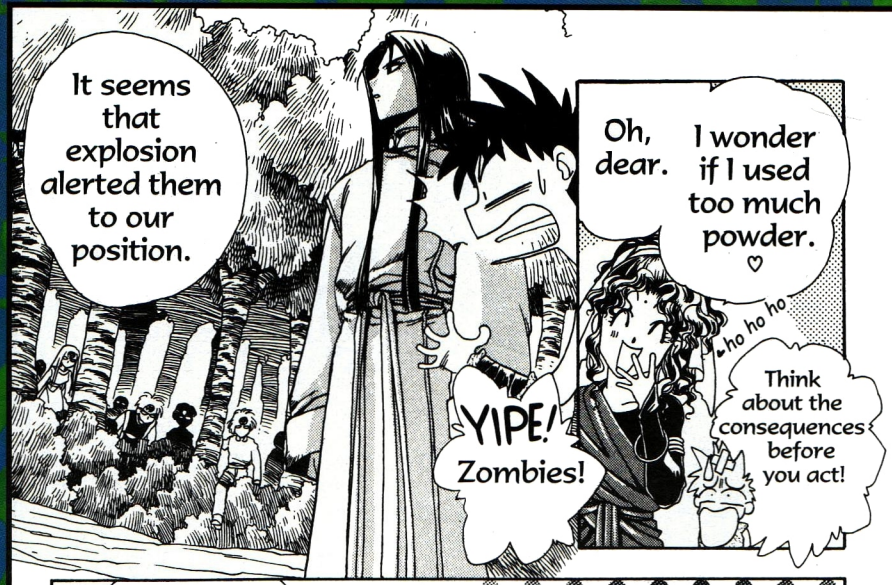

Tee hee hee! ♡
Ssh
AWK!
T-that isn't... explo-sives!
Okay everyone...
...get back!
BOOM
CRACK

We can leave them to Marron.
Let's go, Carrot.
o-okay...

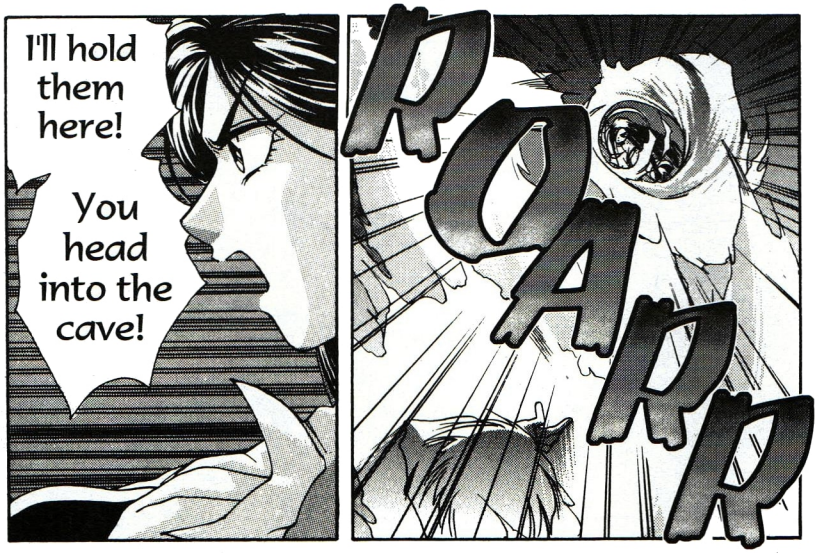
Bro-ther!

Huh?!

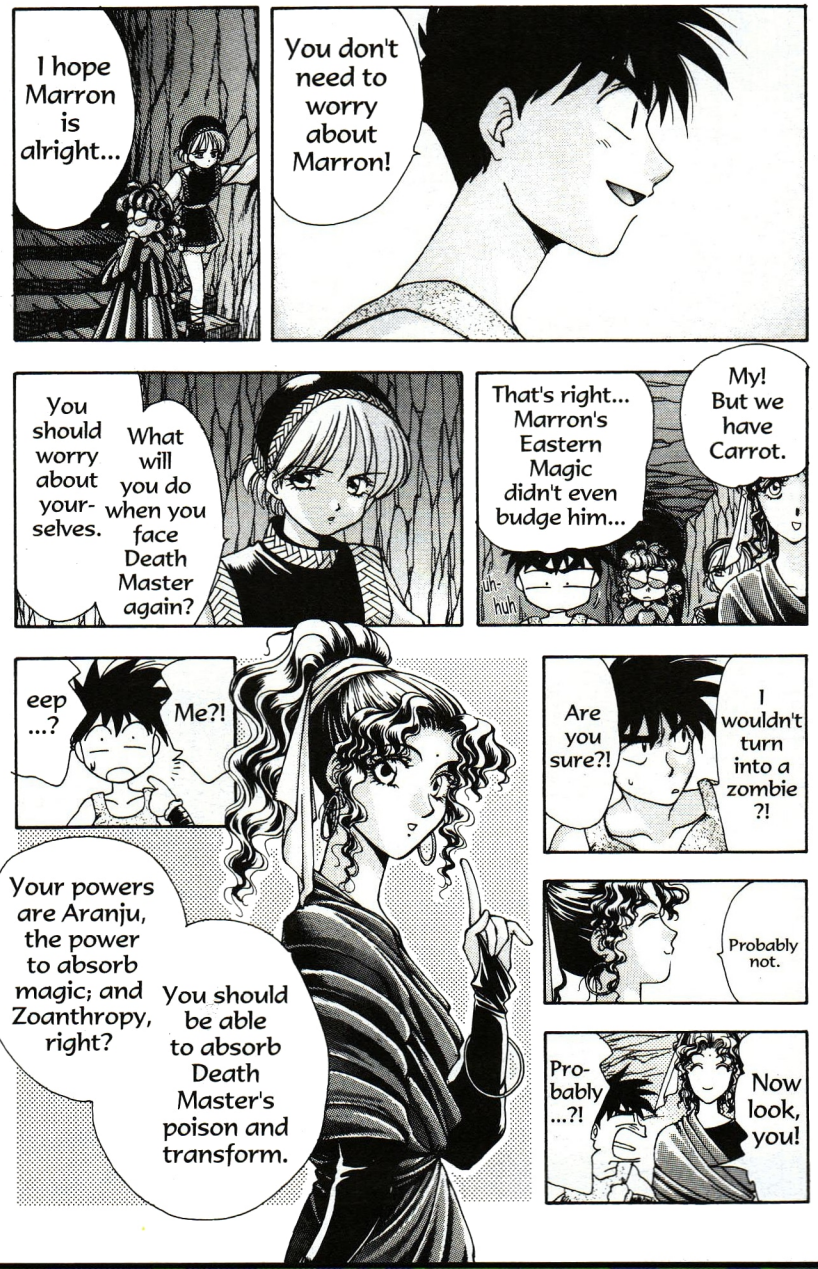
I'll leave the rest to you.
heh


It seems that explosion alerted them to our position.
Oh, dear.
I wonder if I used too much powder. ♡
ho ho ho
YIPE! Zombies!
Think about the consequences before you act!

That's not very convincing, coming from Carrot.

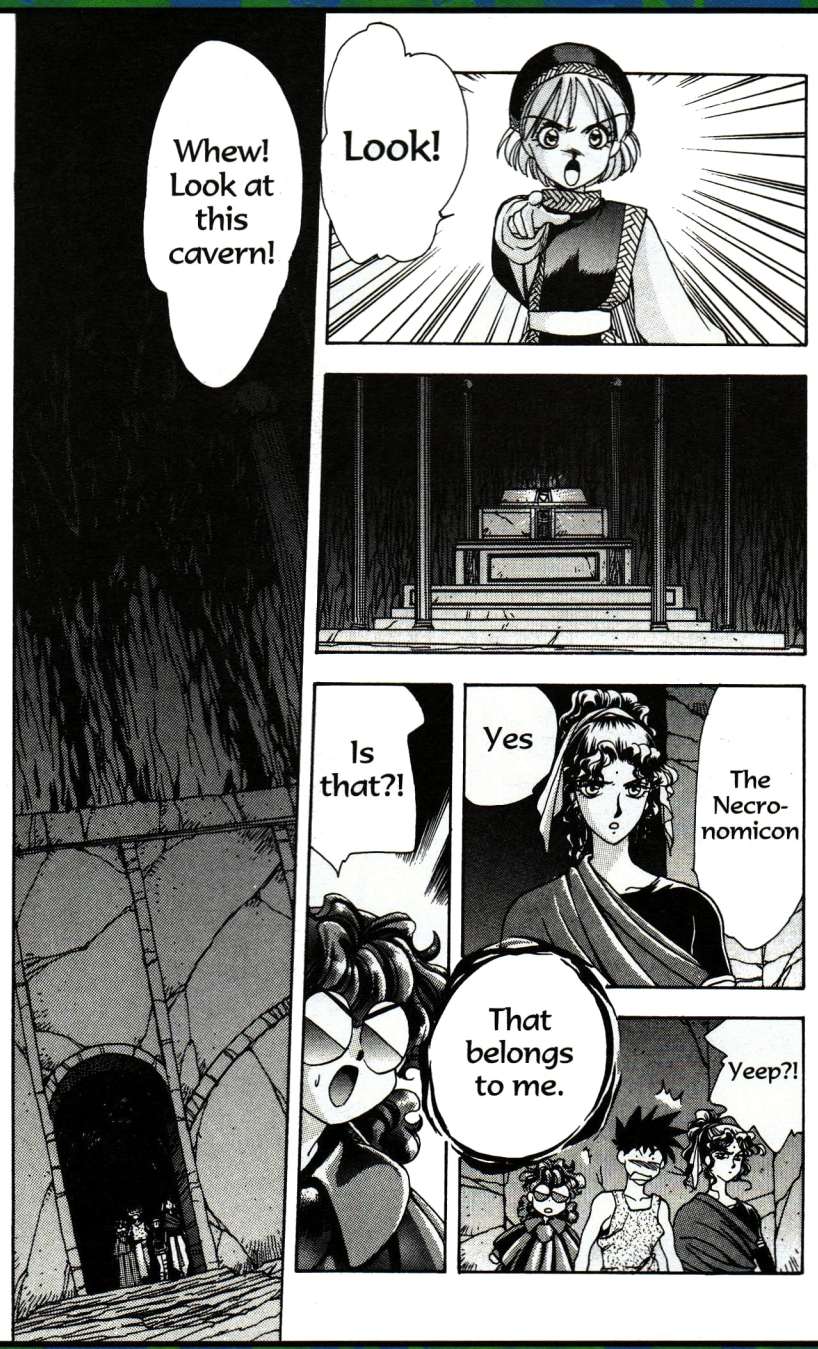

I'll hold them here!
You head into the cave!
ROARR

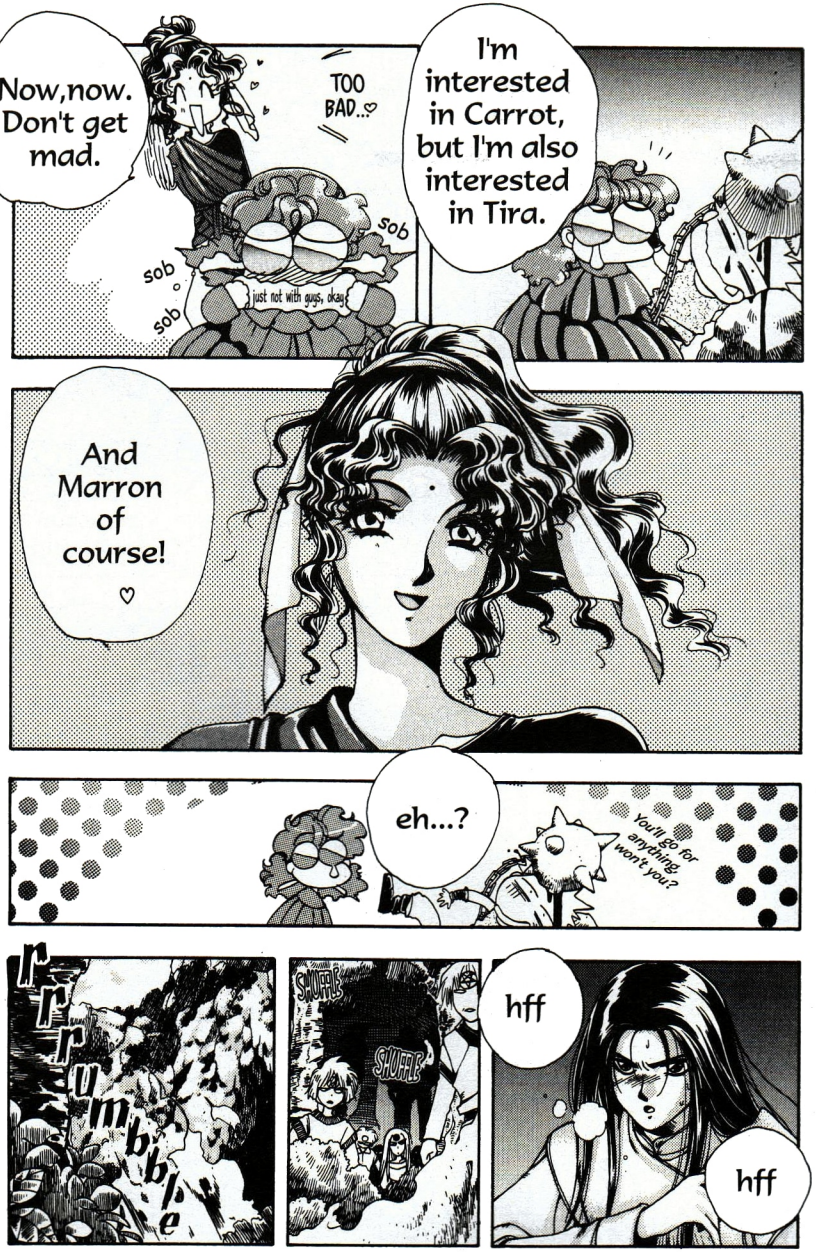
Gotcha! Marron!
Let's go!
GRRAAA
FWOOM
You won't get past me!


I hope Marron is alright...
You don't need to worry about Marron!
You should worry about yourselves.
What will you do when you face Death Master again?
That's right... Marron's Eastern Magic didn't even budge him...
My! But we have Carrot.
uh-huh
eep ...?
Me?!
Your powers are Aranju, the power to absorb magic; and Zoanthropy, right?
You should be able to absorb Death Master's poison and transform.
Are you sure?!
I wouldn't turn into a zombie ?!
Probably not.
Pro-bably ...?!
Now look, you!

Believe in yourself, Carrot.
You have more power than you think you do!
Um... okay...
But that doesn't mean there aren't any problems...
Can you choose what you transform into?
Normally, with your sort of ability, you should be able to discern your opponent's strengths
and transform into a beast suited to fight that.
N-no... I can't...
A long time ago, pop told me that I have 12 Zoantries in my body...
When I absorb magic, they combine in various forms to transform by Zoanthropy...

Like this time you should turn into a beast that uses fire.
roar
If you can't do that we might be in trouble.
Well soorree! I just can't do it!
We're all counting on you, so try your best! ♡
Hey...
But, why do you know so much about me?
Tee hee hee... ♡ Of course, it's because I'm interested in you... ♡
eep!
CARROT!!
That's disgusting! Disgusting!
My!
THD
Urk!
What did I do?!





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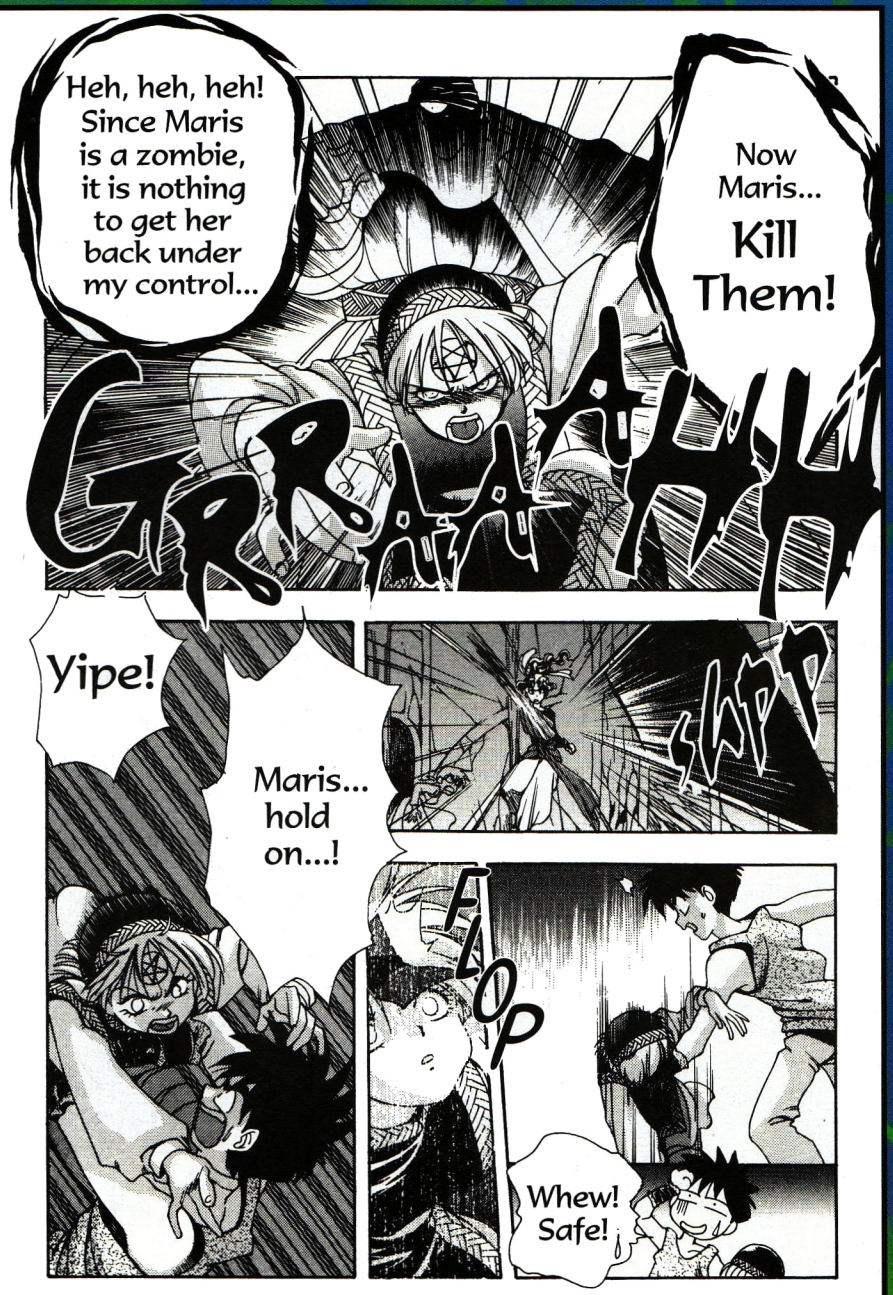
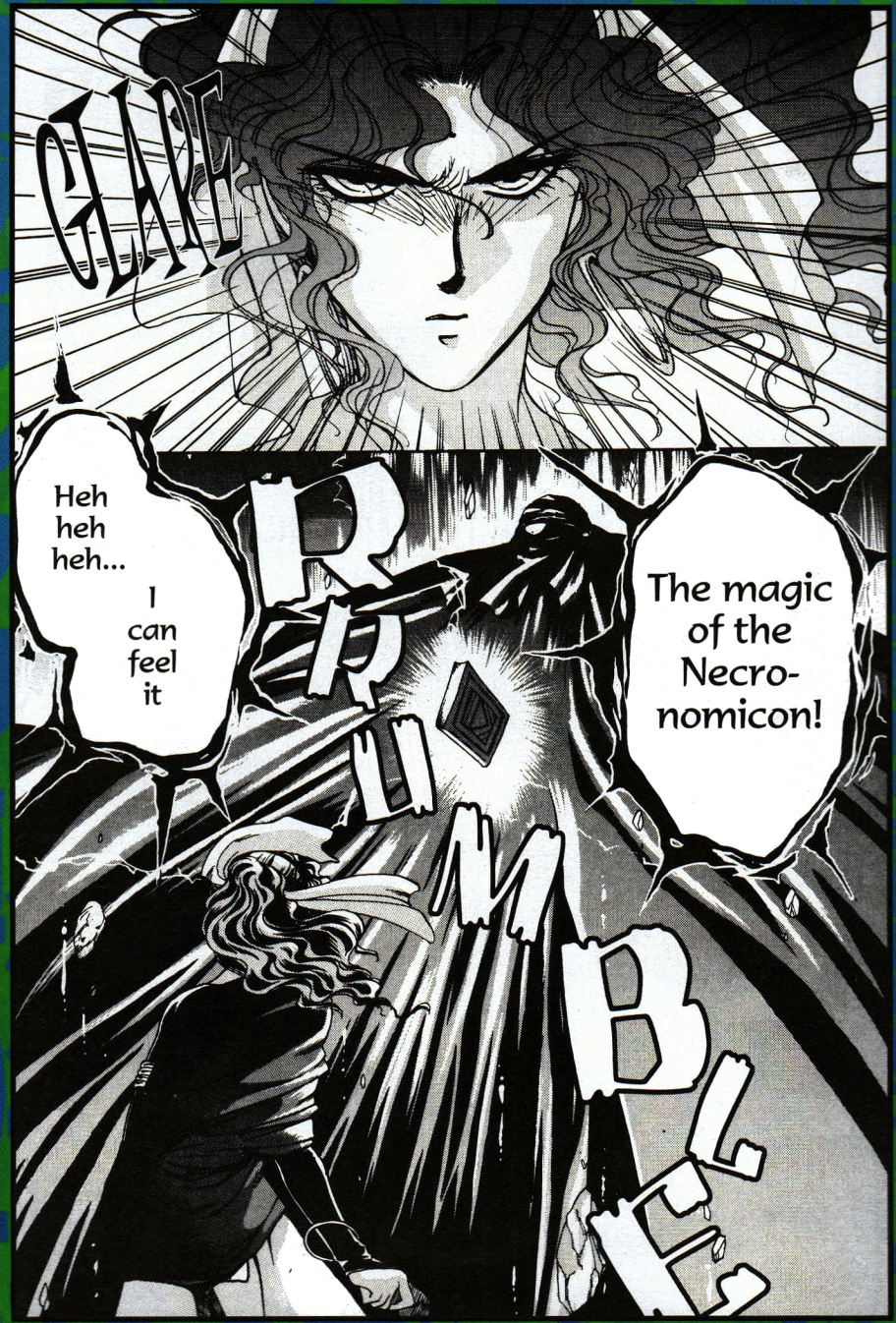
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
ACK!
What's wrong?
I should have known better...


Heh, heh, heh! Since Maris is a zombie, it is nothing to get her back under my control...
Now Maris... Kill Them!
GRAAAHH
Yipe!
Maris... hold on...!
WHP
FLOP
Whew! Safe!

RRRUMBLE
Now, I am the Zombie Master!
See! The power of the Necro-nomicon !!


GLARE
RRRUMBLE
Heh heh heh... I can feel it
The magic of the Necro-nomicon!

WRROARRR
CHICK
pok
CRICK
CRICK

W-what ?!
SNAP
PLNG
My spinning thread!
.....
Heh heh heh heh....
I'll turn you all into zombies!
unk...

AAAHHHHHH!!
Dammmit!

HOOOOOHH

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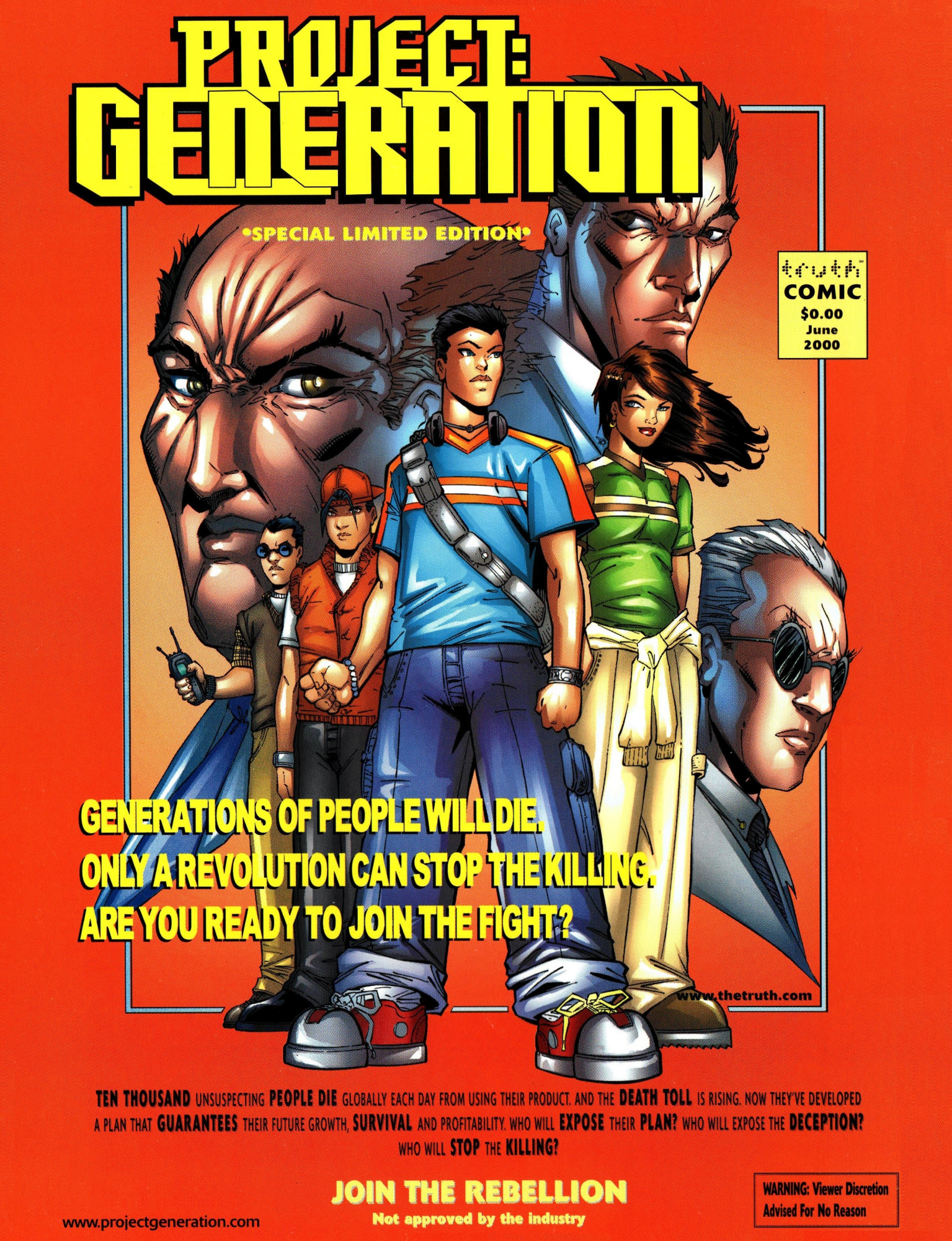
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